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ABSTRACT

Democratization, Civil Society and NGOs: the case of Brčko District, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Alexander Sam Jeffrey, December 2004

This thesis explores the impact of the process of democratization on the development of civil society organisations in Brčko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This study aims to advance existing debates concerning democratization within contemporary political geography by reflecting on the plural and conflicting nature of civil society organisations. In the shadow of the fall of Communism across east and central Europe, analysts have focussed on the role of civil society in legitimising democratic transitions. This has led to the notion of 'civil society building' entering the 'tool kit' of intergovernmental organisations and multilateral donors, as the term has become part of a global discourse of development and democratization. Increasingly, the constitution of civil society has been questioned, as the globalisation of development discourse has coincided with a narrowing of the term to focus almost exclusively on non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This thesis critically examines these processes within Brčko District, an area of north-east Bosnia and Herzegovina that suffered brutal ethnic cleansing during the conflict of the 1990s. As a result of its strategic significance to all warring parties it did not comprise part of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Instead, it was decided to establish the area as a 'special district', with a unique commitment to multiethnic institutions such as schools, judiciary and the police. This decision led to a significant increase in international funding, coupled with the escalation of the executive and legislative powers of the internationally-led Office of the High Representative (OHR). This thesis assesses the influence of this supervision and intervention on the ability of NGOs to set the agenda and represent the concerns of the local citizenry. As such, it forms part of a wider effort to provide ethnographic perspectives on the relationship between civil society and democratization.

**Democratization, Civil Society and NGOs: the case of Brčko
District, Bosnia-Herzegovina**

One Volume

Alexander Sam Jeffrey

Ph.D.

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University of Durham

Department of Geography

2004



21 JUN 2005

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Declaration

None of the material included in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at the University of Durham or at any other university.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

DP – Displaced Person
DMT – District Management Team
FRY – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
IEBL – Inter-entity Boundary Line
ICG – International Crisis Group
I-For – Implementation Force
IRC – International Rescue Committee
IPTF – International Police Task Force
JNA – Yugoslav Peoples' Army
MZ – Mjesne Zajednice
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
OHR – Office of the High Representative
OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RRTF – Return and Reconstruction Task Force
RS – Republika Srpska
S-For – Stabilisation Force
UN – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development programme
UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USDA – United States Department for Agriculture
VOPP – Vance Owen Peace Plan
YCB – Brčko Youth Coordination Body

Chapter 1

Introduction: Research questions and thesis overview

1.1 Introduction

As I approached the Office of the High Representative (OHR)¹ it struck me that the building lived up to its local nickname 'Alcatraz' [see figure 1.1 overleaf]. Located near the centre of Brčko, the building had previously been a secondary school; the only external sign of its change in use was the ten-foot perimeter wall. As I approached the intercom system I rummaged in my bag for my identification card: a library card from a UK university, its legitimacy granted by its metal chain and plastic holder. I pressed a button by a small window and waited. A surly looking security guard asked what I wanted. I said I was there for the non-governmental organisation (NGO) meeting. He went away without a word. A door six feet away made a buzzing noise – I took this as an indication to walk through. In a small entrance lobby I was greeted with a stare from the security guard and asked to walk through an airport-style security gate and place my bag on a conveyor belt. Unlike in an airport, the screen was turned towards me – I could see the silhouette of my voice recorder,

¹ The internationally-led organisation responsible for implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Figure 1.1 Office of the High Representative (OHR), Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

camera, phone, electronic diary and notebooks. I explained that I was in Brčko conducting research about NGOs – this provoked a familiar smile somewhere between amusement and confusion. He said I could go through to the main reception. I walked across the courtyard and through the mirrored glass of the front doors. There I was asked to hand over my identification, it was replaced for a large 'OHR Visitor' badge. As I waited to be escorted through to the conference room I noticed that the area surrounding the reception was exhibiting drawings by school children depicting the Supervisor [head of OHR Brčko] alongside messages of 'Happy Easter'. It seemed ironic that in this former school building the walls were still covered by children's drawings. I was eventually escorted through to a large conference room, where representatives from many of Brčko's NGOs sat in silence looking bored. In one corner sat a group of six 'civilian affairs' soldiers in uniform and at the head of the table three OHR representatives with translators. As the representatives introduced themselves and provided an outline of their activities I started to think: what has brought us all here? Why have the NGO representatives gone through the humiliation of entering this building to sit and listen to the details of the activities of other organisations?

Why is the OHR in Brčko? Why has no one from the Local Government come to the meeting? Why have I come to the meeting?

(Extract from field journal 20th April 2003)

My fieldwork in Brčko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina², was a continual process of questioning the practices and representations that often are subsumed under the rubric of ‘democratization’. In this thesis, I explore the impact of processes of democratization on the development of civil society organisations in Brčko District. My study aims to advance existing debates concerning democratization within contemporary political geography by reflecting on the plural and conflicting nature of civil society organisations and their normative placement within democratization discourses.

The past two decades have seen an increasing focus within the social sciences on the content of democracy and, specifically, how fledgling democracies can “consolidate” (Hall, 1996). In the shadow of the fall of Communism across Eastern and Central Europe, analysts have focussed on the role of civil society in legitimising democratic transitions (Arato and Cohen, 1995; Isaac, 1996; Padgett, 1999). This renewed interest has led to the notion of ‘civil society building’ entering the ‘tool kit’ of intergovernmental organisations and multilateral donors, as the term has become part of a global discourse of development and democratization. Increasingly, the constitution of civil society has come to be questioned, as the globalisation of development discourse has coincided with a narrowing of the term to focus almost exclusively on NGOs.

This thesis critically examines these processes within Brčko District, an area of north-east Bosnia that suffered brutal ‘ethnic cleansing’ during the conflict of the 1990s. As a result of its strategic significance to all warring parties Brčko was left out of the Dayton Peace Agreement, its fate decided by an International Arbitration Tribunal four years later. The tribunal decided to establish the Brčko area as a

² In line with accepted abbreviations, I will refer to ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina’ as ‘Bosnia’ for the remainder of the thesis.

'special district' of Bosnia, with a unique commitment to multiethnic institutions such as government, schools, judiciary and the police. This decision led to a significant increase in international funding, coupled with the escalation of the executive and legislative powers of the internationally-led OHR. This thesis assesses the influence of this supervision and intervention on the ability of NGOs to set the agenda and represent the concerns of the local citizenry. In doing so, this work contributes to wider efforts to provide ethnographic perspectives on the relationship between civil society and democratization.

The ethnographic focus of this thesis has allowed critical reflection on the methodologies employed by political geographers in understanding democratization. This approach has involved a 'multi-scalar' mode of inquiry, looking at the interplay *between* different scales, drawing on Cox (1998) in "challenging the notion that issues are clearly definable in scale-exclusive terms, as local, national or regional" (Cox, 1998: 3). The interaction between NGOs, international organisations and the Brčko District Government is assessed through Amin, Massey and Thrift's (2000) notion of 'politics *in place*' examining participation in "multiple causes and networks of affiliation, resulting in people bearing multiple political identities" (Amin, 2002: 397). The ethnographic methodology employed in this thesis focuses on these hybrid or multiple political identities, vital in a context such as Bosnia where notions of identity have too often been predetermined by essential characteristics.

This methodological approach allows the thesis to focus on the improvised and often contradictory processes through which labels such as 'civil society' are produced in post-conflict Bosnia. Recent scholarship concerning civil society in Bosnia has rightly pointed to the lack of involvement of civil society groups in negotiating the peace settlement following the conflict in 1992-1995, or in shaping the terms of international intervention (Oberg, 2000). But this work has often reproduced a binary between NGOs, imaged as virtuous organisations offering spaces of democratic participation, and international organisations which are perceived as repressive, or even neo-colonial (Chandler, 2000; Evans-Kent, 2002). In

a similar vein, several studies conflate NGOs with civil society, a representative strategy that suggests NGOs are autonomous spaces distinct from the state (Tvedt, 2002). This binary between state and NGOs has been reproduced at the global scale in accounts of a “global civil society”, where networks of NGOs and pressure groups are holding to account the ‘global state’ (represented through intergovernmental organisations and multinational companies) (Kaldor, 2003; Keane, 2003). This thesis wishes to challenge this binary. By examining the state in Bosnia as ‘improvised’, it complicates the division between NGOs and organisations of authority. The ethnographic material points instead to complex and plural relationships which draw NGOs into the gaze of this improvised state in Brčko, and legitimises their existence.

Such a reconceptualisation invigorates understandings of democratization and civil society by drawing on two bodies of theoretical work. The first is the recent critical and ethnographic work re-theorising the state. Authors such as Trouillot (2002) and Painter (2002) have looked to Foucault’s (1991) conception of ‘governmentality’ to focus on the techniques and technologies through which modern state power is reproduced. This is a theme addressed by Navaro-Yashin (2002) in her ethnographic study of the Turkish state, where she examines the mundane or ‘everyday’ practices through which the state revitalises its power. This literature helps illuminate the practices of the improvised state in Brčko, as it shapes the post-conflict political and social fields through a range of governmental techniques. The thesis also engages with Bourdieu’s conceptual vocabulary of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1989, 1990). Bourdieu’s concepts provide a framework for understanding the interplay between structure and agency in determining the social practices of NGOs. This vocabulary helps highlight the struggles between NGOs as they strive to maximise their social and cultural resources to ensure institutional survival. Rather than rehearsing these literatures and their relationship to more standard narratives of civil society formation outside ‘the West’ in an all encompassing literature review, these arguments will be introduced as they become pertinent to the discussion in the thesis.

1.2 Research Questions and Thesis Aims

The central research question of this thesis is:

- *What is the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 'democratization schemes' in Brčko District, Bosnia?*

This question provokes four subsidiary research questions:

- *How is 'democracy' conceived in post-conflict Brčko?*
- *What constitutes an NGO in the context of Brčko?*
- *Which organisations are instrumental in influencing the role of NGOs in Brčko?*
- *Through what mechanisms is this influence manifest?*

In addressing these questions, the thesis seeks to advance contemporary understandings of civil society, intervene in regional debates over the direction and nature of democratization, and contribute to research reflecting critically on the practice of ethnographic fieldwork.

1.3 Thesis Overview

This thesis addresses these research questions over the course of six chapters. **Chapter 2 'Approaches'** reflects on the methodologies employed during the research in Brčko and the subsequent dissemination of findings. Examining the 'everyday practices' of NGOs and international agencies has required an ethnographic approach, encompassing both listening to what people say they do, and

observing how they do it. This chapter addresses, in particular, the political and ethical challenges provoked by this qualitative research process.

Chapter 3 ‘Producing Bosnia’ continues the discussion of the politics of research, this time through an examination of the role of the historian in promoting particular representations of the past. This discussion is developed in the context of the Balkans, where notions of the past have been characterised by reductive images of ancient ethnic hatred or nationalist myth making. Drawing on these insights, this thesis examines the history of Bosnia and, in particular, how the small northern town of Brčko became strategically important to all three warring sides in the conflict from 1992-1995. The strategic importance of Brčko was ‘resolved’ in March 1999 through an internationally-brokered agreement known as ‘The Final Award’.

The implications of this decision are discussed in **Chapter 4 ‘Improvising the State’**. The Final Award created Brčko as a ‘special district’ of Bosnia, with ‘multi-ethnic’ government, judiciary, schools and police. In a parallel process, the award led to an intensification of the power of international agencies operating in the town. Drawing on analysis of literature produced by Bosnian NGOs and interviews with government officials and NGO representatives, this chapter argues that rather than thinking of the state as a distinct set of organisations in Brčko, it is more useful to think of it as an improvised network of local and international agencies performing the practices of the state. In the absence of elections in Brčko, the agencies of the improvised state have measured democracy in terms of the transparency of the activities of the Brčko District Government. Such a measure of democracy has placed a premium on an active civil society, capable of holding the ‘state’ to account. In the case of Brčko, NGOs have been perceived as such civil society actors.

Chapter 5 ‘Local Geopolitics’ examines the emergence of NGOs in Brčko District. In particular, the chapter examines academic literature, policy scripts and interview material to highlight how the geopolitical framing of the Bosnian conflict as a ‘humanitarian disaster’ led to the involvement of NGOs as the main institutional form of international intervention. In the post-conflict period the focus of

international agencies in Bosnia has shifted from humanitarian relief to 'democratization', leaving NGOs filling a new role as organisations of 'civil society'. This has created a paradox: while NGOs are embraced by the agencies of the improvised state as representatives of civil society, their role in delivering internationally-funded humanitarian relief ensures that they continue to be perceived as 'wealthy' and 'international' by members of the Brčko public.

This paradox is explored in greater detail in **Chapter 6 'Gentrifying Civil Society'**. This chapter suggests that the NGOs in Brčko represent gentrified civil society: certain organisations have used their accumulated social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) to secure funding, while others have struggled to adapt to shifting donor discourses. These varied experiences have led to competition and suspicion amongst the NGOs themselves, with some turning to nationalist political parties to fund their activities. By drawing on the interview data with members of community associations and 'failed' NGOs, the thesis examines moments of crisis and reversal within civil society. In particular, this chapter explores how intervention has worked to marginalise potential civil society groups that do not 'fit' the prevailing democratization discourse and therefore have not gentrified. An example is made of the *Mjesne Zajednice* (former Yugoslav 'Local Communities'), a network of territorially bound community associations which had links to the former Socialist State. While they have gained scarce funding from international donors and remain marginalised within formal networks of international/ local NGO collaboration, the *Mjesne Zajednice* have now emerged as key outlets of citizen participation and representation. This detailed investigation provides insights into the premium placed by citizens on familiarity and continuity in this post-conflict environment.

Chapter 7 'Conclusions: Examining spaces of democracy' rethinks the role of NGOs in scenarios of international intervention. Rather than representing an autonomous group of civil society actors, the gentrified NGOs in Brčko were bound in intricate and changing ways to the agencies of the improvised state. This situation is not reflected in current policy literature, keen to represent NGOs as independent from the state, as sites of potential resistance and dissent. This chapter suggests

engaging with spaces of alternative politics in Brčko. This includes spaces such as the *Mjesne Zajednice* which challenge dominant narratives. These associations, difficult to label and define, do not fit the rhetoric and practices of democratization in post-conflict Brčko: they have not been handed an OHR visitors badge, they have not been granted security clearance, and they have not attended OHR meetings.

Chapter 2

Approaches: Researching and representing Brčko District

2.1 Introduction

The violent and protracted disintegration of Yugoslavia stimulated fascination amongst the world's politicians, media and academics in the plight of 'Bosnia'. The creation of the Dayton Bosnian state in 1995 occurred in parallel with the emergence of Bosnia as an object of political campaigns, aid appeals and academic analysis. Bosnia became more than a fledgling European country; it was a *problem* in need of a *solution*. Politicians and academics attempted to find 'causes' of the conflict, setting Bosnia apart as a site of difference, some pointing to the past, suggesting 'ancient ethnic enmity' and 'primordial hatreds', others to international intervention, branding 'Bosnia' as a neo-colonial enterprise. These processes set Bosnia apart as a place whose difference could be understood and solved through careful observation and analysis.

My first visit to Brčko in autumn 1999 was part of an attempted solution to the 'Bosnia problem'. I was UK Coordinator of Firefly Youth Project, a small Scottish NGO carrying out inter-ethnic reconciliation activities in the fields of art, music and theatre in Brčko. My time was divided between fundraising in Edinburgh and implementing a grant from the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Trust Fund in Brčko. This dual role drew my attention to the polarised images of Bosnia. During my visits to Brčko I witnessed an impoverished town struggling in an uncertain economic climate, with an ever-present backdrop of nationalist politics. The most common topics of conversation with friends in Brčko were everyday concerns of job security, poverty or David Beckham, not nationalism or historical hatreds. But these everyday struggles did not seem appropriate to the public in Edinburgh as I attempted to raise money for Firefly's activities. On fundraising trips round Scotland, Bosnia was described to me as a crazed place where friends killed each other in cold blood because they were of different ethnicities, not somewhere where children needed music lessons. When I contacted newspapers to ask them to print a feature on Firefly to generate publicity, the article would often appear with an archive photograph of starved men behind barbed wire or an old lady shuffling past a burnt out building. 'Bosnia' had become a collection of images suggesting a land beyond 'everyday' concerns.

By subjecting Bosnia to academic research there is potential to exacerbate this distancing. The terminology of 'fieldwork' and 'ethnography' are suggestive a latent power relation, presenting the researcher as an agent of enlightenment and Bosnia as a site of inquiry. Recent theorisations of methodological practice have begun to illuminate these power relations and question how they shape the conduct and outcomes of empirical research (McDowell, 1998; Skelton, 2001). Drawing on such studies, this chapter will reflect on the ethical and political challenges that I have faced researching and representing Brčko District. Rather than attempting to divide the research into distinct phases of 'data collection', 'analysis' and 'writing up', this approach allows a discussion of the cyclical, improvised, eclectic and collaborative nature of research and dissemination. Consequently, the first 'international intervention' I will examine in this thesis is my own.

2.2 Research Position

Positionality has become a key concern of theorists of research methodology. This concept challenges the portrayal of the researcher as a neutral observer, external to the object of observation before subjecting their data to interpretation and finally presenting impartial findings. These theoretical developments encourage researchers to place themselves back in the frame of their research to acknowledge how their role shapes the processes they seek to interpret and describe (Rose, 1997; McDowell, 1998). These methodological insights are visible in the work of graphic journalist Joe Sacco (2000, 2001). His work examining the conflicts in Bosnia and Israel/Palestine provides striking examples of acknowledging the researcher, or in this case the journalist, as an active agent in shaping the outcomes of their research. In *Safe Area Goražde* (2000), Sacco compiles an account of his experiences living in the Eastern Bosnian town of Goražde during the Bosnian conflict. Sacco writes himself into almost every frame, distinctive with round glasses, his often naïve questions are written in full and text boxes are used to vocalise his inner-monologue. Figure 2.1 (overleaf) shows two interlinked aspects of Sacco's positionality as a resident in besieged Goražde. Firstly, Sacco alludes to his privileged position as an international outsider, capable of a rapid exit and "...back home to mommy if things really slipped back to unthinkable" (Sacco, 2000: 7). Secondly, the excerpt shows one example of a request for help, in this case from a local resident for original Levi Jeans from Sarajevo. Throughout the book Sacco struggles with ethical questions of who to help and how, and what impact this assistance may have.

There are many parallels between these ethical dilemmas and those I experienced during the research process in Brčko. I was apprehensive at the outset about my change in role from NGO worker to NGO researcher. I was particularly concerned that I would still be perceived as a Firefly employee, a perception that could restrict access to certain organisations or limit the openness of NGO



Figure 2.1 Excerpt from *Safe Area Goražde*

(Source: Sacco, 2000: 7)

representatives to discuss the internal workings of their organisations. In the event this did not seem to be the case or, if it was, it was not manifest as reduced access or guarded responses. The effects of this shift in role seem to have been reduced by the rapid turnover of staff in the NGOs, coupled with the arrival of many new organisations since my time with Firefly. The greater ethical challenge was how to act in response to the many calls for assistance from all the NGOs. My privileged access to audiences with international organisations led to a number of NGOs requesting advocacy on their behalf. These experiences reminded me of Nancy Scheper-Hughes' (1992) study of violence amongst street communities of North East Brazil. Prior to her research she had worked in these communities establishing a crèche and assisting with the immunization of young children. When she returned to Brazil to conduct fieldwork, she described how local people became resentful of her lack of action and help (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 16). My research attracted similar criticism, and I was asked on a number of occasions 'why wasn't I doing anything useful?' In response I attempted to keep the organisations well informed of what I *was* doing and why, through research statements and repeated visits, culminating in a 'dissemination event' towards the end of my research in Brčko (discussed in the final section of this chapter). By drawing together the NGOs, international agencies and representatives of the local government, I attempted 'group advocacy' by discussing the problems that NGOs faced in the presence of those who could perhaps institute change.

While these ethical challenges formed a backdrop to the research in Brčko, over the course of the fieldwork my positionality was not static. I found myself assuming various personas in order to suit the particular research scenario. When interviewing members of international agencies I wore a collar, carried business cards and used my laptop bag as a briefcase. Partially unintentionally I was attempting to act like a member of an international agency, to be part of 'their group'. In these cases time was short so questions needed to be direct and relevant. My background knowledge of Brčko, accrued over my time with Firefly, proved valuable in this context. This research persona was not used for meetings with local community associations, where I 'dressed down' and carried my field equipment in

a cloth bag. I was aware of not wanting to look like a donor, a situation which could raise expectations or suspicion. When conducting interviews with these organisations often the first question I was asked with a hint of suspicion was ‘which organisation was I from?’ When I said a university in the UK, the representatives from the NGOs often seemed to relax. An affiliation to a Brčko NGO or international agency would have affected how open the interviewees felt, for many of the organisations had poor relations with these international organisations and they may have considered my research to be following a particular institutional line. In contrast to the international organisations, during these interviews with local associations and NGOs I employed naïvety as a research strategy, in an attempt to uncover the assumed or the implicit. This approach was particularly important when interviewing nationalist organisations, where naïvety was a useful tool for gaining insights into how these organisations viewed international interventions in Bosnia.

There is not a neutral or disinterested position from which to gauge the effect of these research personas on the production of research findings. One of the key insights of theorisations of positionality is that the researcher is never in the possession of perfect self knowledge (Rose, 1997: 306). In the case of Brčko I cannot know how my deployed personas changed the informants’ perceptions of me or the research process. Ultimately, I carried out these performances for my own benefit, like a chameleon changing my persona to ensure that I felt comfortable and accepted within different scenarios. Perhaps the only conclusion I can draw is that these personas played *some* role, that the research was not a case of uncovering pre-existing findings, but rather a mutual performance of their social construction as a consequence of friction and collaboration between researcher and researched. In order to capture and represent this friction, I chose to employ an ethnographic methodology in my fieldwork in Brčko.

2.3 Ethnography

As mentioned in the introduction, there has been a tendency within accounts of the Bosnian conflict and the post-conflict period to give privilege to the geopolitical or the historical: to understand everything that has happened in Bosnia as the outcome of wider global transformations or the re-emergence of hatreds from the past. These approaches have tended to shape the choice of methodology employed, with such studies often engaging with the discourses of 'key agencies' such as UN bodies or the OSCE, while 'local' opinion was frequently reduced to representatives of intransigent nationalist political parties. In contrast, this thesis has attempted to engage with the people of Brčko, to give primacy to the social processes that make up post-conflict Bosnia. This methodology has been an attempt to evoke Brčko through a description of the local, every-day struggles that are often lost within the distancing discourses of Bosnia. This process began five years ago, when I first arrived with Firefly. The time since can be best described as a protracted ethnography, consisting of structured methodologies examining the practices of individuals and organisations, coupled with a broader process of observation assessing the social contexts in which these practices were embedded (Herbert, 2000). As Cloke *et al.* (2004) suggest, ethnography examines both "what people *say* they do and why, and what they are *seen* to do and say to others" (Cloke *et al.*, 2004: 169 emphasis in the original). The structured methodologies consisted of a survey of the NGOs which were operating in Brčko District coupled with follow-up interviews. By definition, the more unstructured methodologies are difficult to describe. They consisted of a series of practices rather than specific methodologies, grouped around a process of observation of the NGOs and international agencies in Brčko. The main outputs from these unstructured practices were a nine-volume field journal and 800 digital photographs. This coupling of structured and open-ended methodologies has allowed an examination of both the official discourses circulating in post-conflict Brčko but also of the ways in which

these discourses are reshaped, resisted and compromised as they are translated into practice.

2.3.1 Structured Methodologies

Following language training (see below) the first structured research activity conducted in Brčko was an NGO survey, a process which took place from September to November 2002 (see the Thesis Appendix for a copy of the survey). With a year stretching ahead in which to conduct research, the regimented nature of the survey was reassuring – I could print the surveys out, type them up and tick organisations off a spreadsheet. In addition to the survey I prepared and translated a ‘research overview’ for the NGOs, which consisted of an A4 sheet briefly introducing the main themes of the research. The methods for finding organisations to survey were eclectic, shaped by past experience, secondary sources, word of mouth and attending NGO functions. This range of strategies pointed to the problematic definition of what it took for an NGO to ‘exist’. The fuzzy boundary between NGO existence and non-existence is itself an important aspect of analysis of this thesis, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. For the purposes of the survey I drew on the work of Mercer (2002) and Desai (2002) to establish four selection criteria to limit the organisations surveyed: legal registration; social welfare objectives; non-profit, and non-political (in the sense of non-party political) objectives. Following these criteria, eighteen NGOs were surveyed in Brčko.

I had convinced myself prior to arriving in Brčko that the survey would have two main purposes: to act as an ‘audit’ of the NGO sector, and provide research themes which could be examined in greater detail through extended interviews. Though fulfilling these objectives, in practice the main benefit of the survey was that it acted as a useful tool to introduce myself to the NGO volunteers and workers. The NGOs had experienced a number of surveys in the year preceding my research, undertaken or funded by international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or International Rescue Committee (IRC). In light of these surveys I risked being perceived by the organisations in Brčko as ‘just

another international organisation counting the NGOs'. This made me more explicit in my 'research overview' of my independence from donor organisations or international agencies. Despite this potential risk, the surveys from the UNDP and IRC had the advantage of ensuring that my study was considered 'legitimate research' as the questions seemed familiar to the NGOs. This proved a sound strategy, as the open-ended nature of the interviews was a much less familiar medium of research.

From September 2002 until June 2003 I attempted to interview all the surveyed NGOs, in addition to interviewing local and national government representatives, members of 'international organisations' such as the OSCE and United Nations agencies, and representatives from the OHR. I conducted forty-nine extended interviews over this period (see figure 2.2 overleaf), with two further interviews conducted on a one-week visit to Brčko in September 2004. As this interview schedule demonstrates, the interviews were not spread evenly over this time. The extreme cold of January, coupled with many public holidays for differently-timed Catholic and Orthodox New Years and Christmases, made arranging interviews or meetings extremely difficult. Following an improvement in the weather over March and April the interview-rate increased. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the foyer café area of the Hotel Posavina, as it provided a quiet space located in the centre of town (see figure 2.3). As some cafés exhibited ethno-national affiliations, the recently reconstructed hotel benefited from seeming 'neutral'; learning the ethnicised coffee landscape had been important to ensuring that interviewees did not feel uncomfortable. Each interview followed a checklist approach rather than structured questions: as themes were covered in the discussion they were ticked off a list (Allen, 1991; Warrington, 1997: 404). This flexible process was iterative: interview 'findings' could be easily incorporated into future themes for discussion. Brief notes were taken during the interviews, though they were all recorded with a digital voice recorder and the sound files stored on a laptop. The voice recorder's extremely small size, coupled with the fact that it did not require an external microphone, meant that it was an unobtrusive device and only on a two occasions was there objections to its use (and these were only for

Organisation	Representative	Date
N/A	Saška Haramina	22nd August 2002
Office of the High Representative, Brčko	Political Officer	5th September, 2002
Firefly Youth Project, Brčko	Representative	15th September 2002
Counterpart International, Brčko	Official 'C'	4th October 2002
UNDP Brčko Local Action Programme	Project Officer	9th October 2002
CIMIC, Eagle Base Tuzla	Coordination Officer	13th October 2002
EKI Microcredit, Brčko	President	15th October 2002
OSCE, Brčko	Head of Mission	17th October 2002
Serb Sisters' Association	President	23rd October 2002
Božur Women's Association, Brčko	President	21st November 2002
"Baza" Anti Terrorist Organisations, Brčko	President	22nd November 2002
Grčica Youth Association, Brčko	President	22nd November 2002
Brčko Development Agency	Director	4th December 2002
Paraplegics Association, Brčko	President	9th December 2002
Serb Youth Association, Brčko	President	11th December 2002
UNDP Brčko Local Action Programme	Programme Manager	18th February 2003
Office of the High Representative, Brčko	Former Chief of Staff	20th February 2003
Bosnjak Women's Association, Brčko	President	21st February 2003
Vermont, Brčko	President	25th February 2003
Roma Association, Brčko District	President	27th February 2003
CRIC' Agricultural NGO, Dornja Skakava	Programme Manager	18th March 2003
Firefly Youth Project, Brčko	Programme Manager	27th March 2003
Party of Social Democrats (PDP), Brčko	Youth Representative	14th April 2003
Serb Democratic Party (SDS), Brčko	Youth Representative	14th April 2003
UNDP Brčko Local Action Programme	Project Officer	15th April 2003
Party of Democratic Progress (SDP), Brčko	Youth Representative	16th April 2003
Brčko District Assembly	Councillor	21st April 2003
Proni Brčko	Project Officer	22nd April 2003
N/A	Bosnjak Displaced Person	22nd April 2003
Office of the High Representative, Brčko	District Supervisor	24th April 2003
Proni, Brčko	Programme Manager	30th April 2003
Arizona Market, Brčko District	Stallholder	3rd May 2003
N/A	Goran Mihailović	4th May 2003
Proni Brčko	Regional Coordinator	7th May 2003
Brčko District Government	Mayor	8th May 2003
Office of the High Representative, Brčko	Head of Reconstruction and Return	14th May 2003
Counterpart International, Brčko	Official 'A'	15th May 2003
Bosnjak Cultural Association, Brčko	President	19th May 2003
Brčko District Government	NGO Liaison Officer	22nd May 2003
Counterpart International	Official 'B'	22nd May 2003
S-For, Camp McGovern Brčko	Civil Affairs Officer	22nd May 2003
Office of the High Representative, Brčko	Political Officer	24th May 2003
PADCO, Brčko	Economics Advisor	24th May 2003
Bosnian Central Government	NGO Liaison Officer	28th May 2003
Office of the High Representative, Sarajevo	Senior Officer, Sarajevo	28th May 2003
UNDP, Sarajevo	Programme Manager	29th May 2003
USAID, Sarajevo	Project Officer	29th May 2003
Office of the High Representative, Brčko	Former Legal Department Official	2nd June 2003
National Democratic Institute, Brčko	Director	3rd June 2003
GTZ, Tuzla	Funding Advisor	4th June 2003
Mercy USA, Tuzla	Programme manger	15th September 2004
Counterpart International, Brčko	Official 'A'	18th September 2004

Figure 2.2 Interview schedule



Figure 2.3 The Hotel Posavina, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

brief periods within interviews as the interviewee felt the topic was too sensitive to be 'on the record'). The majority of the interviews were transcribed in Brčko, and the transcripts were then coded and analysed on return to Durham using *Atlas.ti* discourse analysis software.

Though a number of the NGOs asked 'why' I wanted to conduct this research, this did not seem a defensive statement or an attempt to hide the practices of their organisation, but came rather on account of the perceived banality of particular questions. In order to relax the interviewee (and interviewer) interviews were designed to open with seemingly mundane aspects of institutional practice. The more sensitive questions relating, for example, to aspects of funding or relations with the government, could be broached towards the end of the interview when trust and familiarity had been established. In practice, this chronology would often have to be disregarded as the interviewees were not keen to engage in 'small talk' and would rather discuss the many difficulties they faced in terms of funding and regulation. In these instances, the interviews seemed to function as a pressure release for the organisations, and I served as a suitable sounding board for their

complaints. On one occasion, I visited the Brčko Paraplegics Association just to pick up a completed survey and it took forty minutes for the president to finish describing the litany of difficulties and injustices that his organisation faced. “You must write a book” he said “of the problems in Brčko”¹. This ‘sounding board’ role was not restricted to NGOs; I seemed to switch from researcher to confidante on a number of occasions with members of international organisations. It seemed their everyday routine did not seem to offer such an opportunity to air grievances about the situation in Brčko.

The role of the interviews as a therapeutic process was not one I had envisaged in the research design phase, however, and it raised particular ethical dilemmas. I often had to clarify whether comments made outside of the formal interviewing process were made ‘on the record’, and unsurprisingly these remarks were often taken back, or I was informed that entire conversations ‘did not happen’. This would prompt a negotiation where certain comments were deemed passable for the research, particularly as I had reassured each research participant that their contribution would be anonymous. This negotiation seems to reflect Parr’s (2001) assertion that ethnographic findings are not realities extracted from the field, but are rather “intersubjective truths” emerging from “the warmth and friction of an unfolding iterative process” (Parr, 2001: 181). In addition to the interviews and surveys, this ‘warmth and friction’ was evident in the wider ethnographic process of participant observation.

2.3.2 Observation

The interviews and surveys provided rich qualitative material concerning the practices and beliefs of the representatives of NGOs and international organisations, often used throughout this thesis in large unedited quotations. This material is supported by the insights gained from visiting Brčko regularly over the past five years, and specifically from living in the town from August 2002 to July 2003. This fieldwork period was spent living with a family in the Srpska Varoš area of Brčko

¹ Comment made by the President of the Paraplegics Association, Brčko 3rd October 2002.

town (see figure 2.4). My landlord was the foreman of the *Tesla* battery factory and had lived in Brčko his entire life. Over summer barbeques or winter glasses of *domaće vino* (domestic wine) he talked of his life in Brčko, of picnics on the banks of the Sava, of shopping trips to Vinkovci or Trieste, and the challenge of keeping his factory running. It is difficult to gauge the effect of these and other day-to-day experiences on the outcomes of this thesis: again, I do not have a neutral position outside of the research from which to make an assessment. I can, however, document the series of ethnographic practices which were undertaken in an attempt to record the complexity and heterogeneity of Brčko District.



Figure 2.4 View of Srpska Varoš, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

The main activity of this ethnographic methodology was writing a field journal. This required around an hour-and-a-half each day, and formed an inner monologue concerning my experiences, observations, embryonic theories and day-to-day concerns. At the outset the journal was most often employed for this latter function, serving the same therapeutic 'sounding board' role that the interviews

seemed to play for the research participants. In these cases the journal played a similar role to the text boxes found in the work of Joe Sacco (2001, see figure 2.1). In the early stages I was not sure what I was meant to write in this journal or what observations qualified as 'research observations'. In this respect I followed the advice given to Katy Bennett, to "just keep writing" (Bennett and Shurmer-Smith, 2001: 255). Whilst the interview transcripts provided an account of what was said in the interviews, I used the journal to annotate these texts with other qualitative aspects of the interview experience, such as what the atmosphere was like, how I felt it went and what was discussed outside the formal interview process. These details appear throughout the thesis and provide vital context to the interview quotations.

Though I was not an NGO employee or volunteer over the research period (for the reasons explained in the 'Research Position' section above) I did participate in the broader practices of the NGOs and international organisations in Brčko. This involved activities as diverse as attending NGO coordination meetings at the OHR, watching theatrical productions, taking part in a workshop concerning the Brčko environment, and attending a UNDP press conference, an event which culminated in the rather strange experience of being interviewed by Brčko television on the prospects for entrepreneurs in the town. However, a selective methodology which merely observed such activities would miss the more banal, and I would argue more important, activities which comprised day-to-day life for the NGOs. The formal activities were punctuated by regular visits to Brčko cafés to drink coffee, venues that seemed to hold far more insights into the practices of NGOs than meeting rooms or seminar halls. Indeed, coffee was so important to the routines of the NGOs that it was often better to go to a specific café than attempt to track an individual down by telephone or visiting an office. These café trips were not, of course, restricted to the NGOs. When I met with the head of the Department of Records at Brčko District Government he refused to talk unless we could go to the Hotel Posavina and eat ice-cream first. This rhythm of institutional activity provided the time to write the journal, as a good proportion of each day would be spent waiting in a café for the next interview or meeting.

The journal also served as a text through which the Brčko landscape could be interpreted, providing a space to discuss the road signs, graffiti, monuments and even the car number plates. This text was supported by an archive of digital photographs, though there were restrictions on what I could photograph. Such restrictions were illustrated by a trip I made to photograph the Brčko suburb of Klanac, an area which had been destroyed during the conflict and is now the location of a number of returned refugee families (see figures 2.5 and 2.6 overleaf). While walking through Klanac taking photographs I became aware of a van following me along the road. Finally it pulled over and two angry men emerged, demanding to know why I had been taking photographs. It was difficult to think of a reason; I thought my explanation of ‘conducting research’ would sound feeble. It did. After some time the two men called the police, who arrived promptly and, again, asked what I was doing. I explained that I was from a university in the UK and I was taking photographs for research purposes. The police did not seem impressed, though the two men were now more bemused than angry. In the absence of formal identification the police took details of my ‘Young Person’s Railcard’ and I was told not to take any more photographs around Klanac. A few days later a friend explained that groups in Brčko used to take photographs of the homes of returnee families as a tactic of intimidation.

Following this incident I was more selective of the photographs I took and more covert when I took them. The incident was, however, illustrative of more than Brčko’s sensitive returns situation. This episode also demonstrated the importance of photography as a weapon in post-conflict Brčko. This example illustrates how a seemingly innocent activity can become a threat through its context (Smith, 2003). While the journal and photography were useful in providing a record of my experiences, the incident in Klanac points to how these observations comprise a process of translation as ideas and practices are mapped between cultural contexts. The research was not simply a report of the activities of the NGOs and international agencies in Brčko, but an attempt to convey the meanings that they described in different linguistic and cultural terms. This process has demanded sensitivity to the politics and ethics of translation.



Figure 2.5 View of Klanac, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 2.6 Catholic church, Klanac, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

2.4 Translation

Pierre Bourdieu (1989) suggests that the ability to name and label social practices is a product of “symbolic capital”. “Symbolic capital” he continues, “is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu, 1989: 22). Amongst other contexts, Bourdieu applies this theorization to the process of academic research, where he suggests that the academic holds symbolic capital in the form of degrees and educational certificates (Bourdieu, 1988). The concept of symbolic capital is particularly relevant where the research involves the mapping of ideas and discourses from one cultural context to another. During the process of interpretation the meanings can be obscured and transformed as the cultural context is changed. In such instances, social practices can be reduced to sanitized discourses palatable to an academic audience. An attempt to retain the meaning of the ethnographic material gathered in Brčko required both learning the languages spoken in the interviews, and a strategy of involving the research participants in the process of interpretation. These strategies of linguistics and dissemination stimulated separate ethical challenges for the research methodology.

2.4.1 Linguistics

It should be stated at the outset that the challenge of translating the meanings behind the discourses and practices of the organisations in Brčko did not always mean negotiating a second language. Discussing the situation in Bosnia with members of international or developmental agencies, while in English, required knowledge of the ‘Bosnia speak’ through which their policies, activities and beliefs were phrased. This ‘language’ consisted of its own vocabulary of acronyms, peace agreements and political events. Like Serbo-Croat², this language has demanded translation and interpretation, as the interview material was imbued with meaning in

² The name used for the language spoken in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia and Montenegro is not politically neutral, as discussed in this section. For convenience I will refer to this language by its pre-1990 title of Serbo-Croat for the rest of this thesis.

the analysis process. The experience of working for Firefly in Brčko gave me some familiarity with this 'Bosnia speak' of international and development agencies. This helped with the research methodology, though this did not resolve the challenges of translating the images and discourses of 'Bosnia speak' when analysing the research data.

The greater challenge for the research process in Brčko was learning Serbo-Croat. I had a basic knowledge of the language from working in Brčko, though to carry out ethnographic research demanded in-depth language training. Through the Modern Languages Department of the University of Durham I met a Bosnian undergraduate student who was reading Russian and offered tuition in Serbo-Croat. This tuition brought me to a conversational standard prior to the start of the fieldwork in Brčko. On arrival in Brčko I organised lessons with a language student and with a tutor at 'Proni', a social education NGO based in Brčko. While these lessons were helpful in teaching the vocabulary and grammar of Serbo-Croat, they were also instructive in highlighting the politics of language in post-conflict Brčko.

Language had been a key medium for developing and strengthening nationalist identities during the break up of Yugoslavia, an issue discussed in Chapter 3. Over the course of the conflict Serbo-Croat fractured between the three main ethno-national groups to form three languages, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. The differences in terms of grammar and vocabulary are negligible between the three languages, though the impression of distinct languages has been essential to nationalist political projects. It became clear during the research process that to call the language any one of these three titles was to demonstrate a tacit alignment with a particular ethno-national cause. Interestingly, in an attempt to circumvent this politics, the language was referred to as simply *lokalni jezik* ('local language') by the majority of research informants. This neutral label did not resolve all the methodological difficulties in using Serbo-Croat. In addition to the name of the language there were also political conflicts surrounding the dialect used and the script in which it was written. There are two broad dialects of Serb-Croat, the *ekavski* spoken in Serbia and parts of Bosnia and the *ijekavski* spoken in Croatia and parts of Bosnia. The central difference between these two dialects is the addition of

“j” in certain words. Examples include bread, (*hleb* in *ekavski* or *hljeb* in *ijekavski*), snow, (*sneg* in *ekavski* or *snijeg* in *ijekavski*) or river (*reka* in *ekavski* or *rijeka* in *ijekavski*). These dialects were explicitly linked to Croatian and Serbian causes during the conflict, with one friend recounting how there had been a popular Croatian slogan that the Eastern Croatian town of Osijek, besieged by Serbian troops, “[...] would never become Osek!”³ The multi-ethnic status of Brčko meant that both the *ekavski* and *ijekavski* dialects were spoken. This dual dialect not only led to problems of understanding, but also meant that I had to shift between the two when I spoke Serbo-Croat so as to avoid suggesting an ethno-national affiliation.

In addition to the dual dialects, the multi-ethnic status of Brčko also means that Serbo-Croat is written in both the Cyrillic and Latinic scripts (see figure 2.7). While Cyrillic has roots in the Serb Orthodox Church, it was drawn upon as a nation-defining quality by Serb nationalist politicians during the break-up of Yugoslavia. As a consequence, the Serb parts of Bosnia solely use the Cyrillic script while the Bosniak and Croat parts of the country use the Latinic script. As both Cyrillic and Latinic are used in Brčko it was important to learn Cyrillic for the fieldwork process. As my laptop could not produce Cyrillic script the NGOs survey was distributed in Latinic, though it was completed by two Serb youth organisations in Cyrillic. It was also important to know Cyrillic for the broader purposes of reading the Brčko landscape of road signs, café menus, election posters and graffiti.

Despite learning Serbo-Croat to a conversational level the politicisation of dialect and script meant that it was vital to recruit a research assistant, not simply to help with the task of translating interviews but also with the wider task of mapping ideas and practices between different contexts. In post-conflict Bosnia translating had become a sought-after skill, and this has had an impact on the price of hiring translators in Brčko. Since professional translators were prohibitively expensive, I recruited assistants that, while fluent at English had only limited experience of translating. For the first five months I employed Dragana, an English student from Banja Luka University and for the second five months Sanela, a former NGO employee. The two research assistants added different perspectives to the study as

³ Interview with Goran Mihailović, Brčko 4th May 2003.

the first was a Serb and the second a Bosnijak. Both had lived in Brčko all of their lives, though like many of the Bosnijaks in Brčko, Sanela was displaced to the nearby village of Gornji Rahić during the conflict. The inexperience of both RAs meant that concurrent translation was not always possible, or I would hear certain aspects of an informant's answer being lost in the need to give a prompt English commentary. In an attempt to reduce the amount of lost information, the research assistant and I would always talk through the content of an interview in its immediate aftermath.



Figure 2.7 Dual-script road sign, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

Though vital for translating meanings between different contexts, the use of research assistants created the greatest ethical problems I faced during the research in Brčko. The selection process was extremely difficult, the job was well sought after and I risked alienating myself from a number of local NGOs by simply choosing the 'wrong' person at the outset of the fieldwork. Consequently I conducted a low-key recruitment procedure in an attempt to avoid raising expectations and leaving a large number of unsuccessful candidates. I was unprepared for the difficulties of acting as an employer, particularly when in case of one of the research assistants their wages comprised a main household income. This meant that research strategy had to be thought out well in advance so that the length

of employment was established from the outset. It also led to the difficulty of finding activities when potential interviewees were either on holiday, unavailable or simply did not turn up. Another implication of sharing the research was the difficulty of retaining confidentiality. I briefed both assistants about the ethical duty of confidentiality, noting that the information gained in the interviews must not be communicated with other individuals and organisations in Brčko. These issues of confidentiality re-emerged, however, when over the course of an interview with a donor organisation Dragana asked if they could help an NGO we had interviewed earlier that day. I discussed this breach of confidentiality with Dragana after the interview, drawing her attention to the importance of not discussing sensitive information gained from other organisations, and the need to separate advocacy activities from the practice of research. “Well” she responded “you obviously don’t want to help the NGOs”⁴.

Despite these practical and ethical difficulties, the research assistants were vital to the process of translating the social practices of the individuals and organisations in Brčko into a different language and cultural context. While careful translation may ensure that the meanings behind particular interview responses are retained, this does not reduce the role of the researcher in choosing how these meanings are reshaped through the process of interpretation and dissemination. In an attempt to draw the research participants into this process of interpretation I organised a dissemination event towards the end of the fieldwork period in Brčko. As discussed earlier in the chapter, this event also acted as a forum where the NGOs could voice their concerns relating to regulation and funding to representatives from the District Government and international agencies.

2.4.2 Cartography

The politics of cartography was a central consideration during the researching and writing of this thesis. There has been much work within human geography highlighting the role of maps as political texts (Wood, 1993; Dorling and

⁴ Comment by Dragana, Brčko, 15th October 2002.

Fairbairn, 1997). As suggested by Campbell (1998a) “maps are exemplary moments that manifest the relationship between power and knowledge” (Campbell, 1998a: 401). This nexus of power and knowledge was brought to the fore during the diplomatic efforts to resolve the Bosnian conflict, where resolutions were structured around the division of the Bosnian territory through numerous cartographic ‘fixes’ (an issue that will be discussed in Chapter 3). The culmination of such cartographies was the map produced at the Dayton Agreement, perhaps the clearest example in Bosnian terms of the power of cartography to solidify social difference in space.

Through the writing process I have struggled with these issues of, on the one hand, wishing to illustrate the spatial context of Brčko through the use of maps, whilst on the other concerned that such maps are highly subjective and reify particular political projects. In the interest of consistency through the thesis, the maps in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 were all drawn using Adobe Illustrator 10, employing base map data and images from secondary texts and websites (the specific sources are indicated as footnotes). These maps should be deconstructed like any others – their point is not to represent ‘reality’ but to illustrate the changing way that territory has been divided and represented over the course of Bosnia’s and Brčko’s history. My control over aspects such as which maps to draw, the thickness of the lines and the colours used to represent and divide territory require particular consideration as they present another important aspect of the power afforded to the researcher by the process of writing and representing post-conflict Bosnia.

2.4.3 Dissemination

The dissemination event held at the end of the fieldwork period in Brčko presented a series of challenges for the research process. The first of these was logistical: I required a space large enough to accommodate all the research participants. It became apparent that the market for conference space had been inflated in much the same way as for translators following the arrival of international agencies in Brčko. This prohibitive cost meant that I would have to seek donor funding for the event, a situation which could compromise the appearance of

research autonomy that I had conveyed to the NGO representatives. This potential risk did not outweigh the value I placed on the discussion and feedback of the dissemination event, so I began searching for donors who would fund this one-off event. Finally, I approached the Head of OSCE Brčko, who agreed to sponsor the event on the understanding that he could invite officials from other OSCE field offices to attend, in addition to the members of the Youth Coordination Body (YCB)⁵. I was reticent to agree to these terms as the YCB involved political parties who, at that stage, had not participated in the research. However, these political parties had been regularly discussed by the NGOs in both positive and negative terms, and I felt their presence would certainly help stimulate discussion. Short of other options, I agreed to the OSCE's terms. This loss of ownership of the event would prove frustrating, as the choice of venue and number of invitations was outside my control. In the end the event was held at the International Press Centre in central Brčko, with invitations sent to all of the NGO representatives I had interviewed, members of the OHR, officials from the District Government, political party members and, most surprisingly, Brčko television.

These logistical dilemmas and challenges were matched by concerns over the content of my presentation. As the day of the event drew near, the notion of sharing my findings with the NGOs, and now political parties, seemed daunting. Rather than suggesting potential conclusions or policy implications, I wanted the presentation to stimulate feedback from the NGO representatives. This meant avoiding academic jargon or theoretical references, and focussing instead on the experiences of the NGOs as they had been phrased in the interviews. By constructing a *PowerPoint* presentation around the external relationships of NGOs with other organisations (such as the state, international agencies, private enterprises and between different NGOs) I used the NGO interview responses to conjure questions about the role of NGOs in Brčko. These anonymous responses were placed in speech bubbles and appeared in the presentation in both Serbo-Croat and English (see figure 2.8 overleaf). These issues had often been presented in hushed

⁵ The Youth Coordination Body was an initiative established by the OSCE in 2001 to encourage youth political participation in Brčko, discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

tones during the interviews, and the presentation provided a good opportunity to discuss them in a more open environment.

The dissemination event began at around 11.30am in a third-floor room in the International Press Centre. As the name suggests, the space was more suitable for a press conference than a group discussion, with a raised table at one end of the room holding extravagant displays of plastic flowers. It was evident that the room was usually used for television purposes, as the walls were covered in garish advertisements for soft drinks, crisps and tobacco. These product placements made me unsure why I had been so concerned about the effect of donor funding on my research autonomy – these advertisements suggested the research had similar backing to a Formula One team. The turnout was very good, with around forty participants, and two cameras from Brčko television. My concerns over the ownership of the event were confirmed when an OSCE representative opened proceedings with a ten-minute discussion of the merits of recent Council of Europe regulations concerning civil society. My presentation followed to the now suitably subdued audience, and I went slowly through some of the research findings. The presentation mirrored the plan for the interviews in following a rough structure from quantitative factors (number of NGOs and their activities) through to more conceptual questions of the role of NGOs in Brčko.

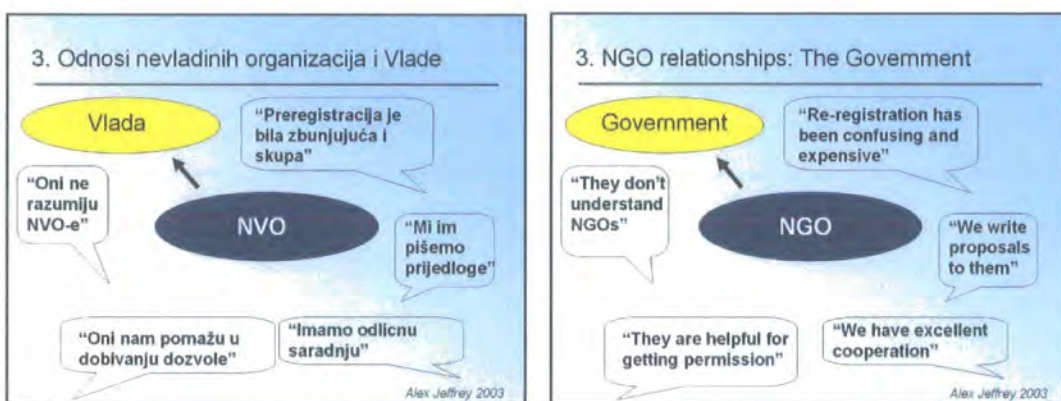


Figure 2.8 PowerPoint slides from the dissemination presentation

Though the television cameras lost interest at the mid way point, the rest of the audience seemed to follow the presentation. The ensuing discussion was lively, with the NGO representatives jockeying to make contributions, commenting on both the presentation and the outcomes of the research. These comments were extremely useful for the research and have shaped the writing of this thesis; in a number of places they have been used as direct quotations. The discussion was informally chaired by the Head of OSCE Brčko, though he seemed more intent on establishing a set of criteria, or demands, which the NGOs should present to the Brčko Government. This had been an ongoing theme of the Head of OSCE Brčko; he had stated on an earlier occasion that he felt the NGOs were “reactive rather than active”⁶.

The one main criticism of the presentation offered by the NGO representatives was that I had only concluded with a set of questions, a move I had made to promote discussion. A number of representatives wanted to know what I thought ‘should be done’. This was a difficult question to answer. My opinion, or interpretation, had been manifest through the choice of quotations and the challenges I felt the NGOs faced. This approach had been designed to demonstrate the complexity of the NGO position in Brčko, that they faced challenges beyond simply a ‘lack of money’, as they struggled to gain recognition from a diverse range of agencies with which they were embroiled through various relationships. In short, I strived throughout the presentation, and this thesis, to avoid reducing the complexity of Brčko to a ‘problem’ to which I have an innovative ‘solution’.

2.5 Conclusion

Creating knowledge about a different cultural context is a fraught ethical and political process. Reflecting on past ethnographic methodologies lends a retrospective logic to this process, suggesting a pre-planned element to all the events which led to this thesis. This was certainly not the case in Brčko, where I often found myself down a research dead-end, perhaps standing in a village with a

⁶ Interview with the Head of OSCE Brčko, 17th October 2002.

research assistant, no sign of an interviewee and no bus for two hours. This chapter has provided an opportunity to reflect on the importance and relevance of this eclectic process. A key ethical and political challenge has been negotiating and documenting my own positionality. The role of researcher granted a position to advocate for particular organisations, a privilege which is sure to have shaped the responses by certain organisations, keen to place their work in a 'good light'. I found myself deploying, or reshaping, my positionality in different research contexts, as I attempted to mould my persona to those I was interviewing. To see these shifts in research persona in terms of success or failure suggests some objective criteria on which they could be judged; the only real success was that I felt more comfortable by enacting these performances.

Retaining the meanings of the interview responses from the context of Brčko to the academic environment of a UK university has involved a process of translation. It became apparent over the course of the research that meanings are not simply 'lost' in translation, but also found. The practices and discourses of the individuals in Brčko have been reformulated as they are mapped between different cultures. I have attempted to mediate, or at least recognise, this process of translation over the course of the research. This process of translation did not end with my return from Brčko. The writing of this thesis has required continued appreciation of issues such as positionality and changing contexts. The following chapter documents a task that exhibits both context and positionality: the challenge of writing a history of Bosnia.

Chapter 3

Producing Bosnia: History, Yugoslavia and war

3.1 Introduction

The landscape of Brčko District is marked by signs of international intervention. Concrete is mixed in old metal drums with 'USAID Food Aid' printed on the side. The verges of the town are kept trimmed and litter-free by a band of workers dressed in orange UNDP-sponsored uniforms. The streets are subject to patrols by United States S-For (Stabilisation Force) troops in armoured personnel carriers. Over it all stands a billboard advertising the successes of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMBIH). It is the aim of this chapter to examine the historical and geographical antecedents to this intervention. This is achieved through a chronological analysis of how Bosnia became a site of conflict in the early 1990s, a consequence of which was the emergence of Brčko as a strategically important and contested area. The origins of this contestation provide an important context for an examination of the discourses and practices of international intervention in Brčko in the remaining chapters of the thesis.

The aim of this chapter is to examine how the Brčko area assumed such strategic significance following the conflict in Bosnia. Before tracing the emergence of conflict on the Balkan Peninsula, it is necessary to discuss the problematic nature of writing history. Drawing on developments within historiography over the last three decades, I examine the role of the historian as an active agent in interpreting and constructing historical narratives. This is particularly pertinent when examining competing nationalist discourses, dependent as they are on 'the past' as a space of national unity and shared understanding. These processes reflect Ernest Gellner's assertion that "nationalism is not the reawakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist" (Gellner, 1964: 169 in Anderson, 2003: 6, emphasis in Anderson). While this national myth-making forms one area of historical manipulation, the other is the role of 'the Balkans' in contemporary academic, policy and popular texts as a 'European other'.

The role of such imaginaries seems particularly important in the case of Bosnia, where 'the past' has become an arsenal of representations deployed to support specific political objectives. Consequently, this chapter does not (and cannot) present *the* definitive narrative of the events which led to conflict in Bosnia and the resulting strategic sensitivity of Brčko. There have been numerous attempts at such a linear account, each suggesting a different cause of the conflict, justified through 'rigorous' historical reconstruction. Rather than adding to these, this discussion will draw attention to the historical events that have been utilised to produce 'Bosnia' as an object of enquiry, a site of violence or as a locus for intervention. These discussions are vital in appreciating the complexity of Bosnia, and to understanding the current status of Brčko as an anomaly within its post-conflict political landscape.

3.2 The Challenge of Writing History

It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by "finding," "identifying," or "uncovering" the "stories" that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between "history" and "fiction" resides in the fact that the historian "finds" his [sic] stories, whereas the fiction writer "invents" his [sic]. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which "invention" also plays a part in the historian's operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs.

(White, 1973: 6-7)

Hayden White's comment, taken from the canonical *Metahistory* (1973), highlights the role of historians as active agents in shaping, through processes of selection and omission, the historical narratives that they seek to present. This sentiment has charged an argument within historiography as to the ability of historians to make claims to 'fact'. On the one hand, Carr (1987) argues for greater relativism within historical accounts, suggesting "the belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy" (Carr, 1987: 12). On the other, Eric Hobsbawm (1997), while concerned with the use and abuse of history in society and politics, sees dangers in suggesting that historical 'facts' exist only as a function of prior concepts (Hobsbawm, 1997: viii). Hobsbawm calls for a balance to be struck between a positivist notion of the historian carefully documenting a stream of historical fact and a boundless relativism that questions an objective reality, stating that "without the distinction between what is and what is not [...] there can be no history" (Hobsbawm, 1997: ix).

These debates have brought to the fore the role of historical narratives as political texts, drawing on a certain vision of the past in order to justify or challenge the present. As reflected in the methodological theorisations of 'positionality'

discussed in the previous chapter, there is no 'objective' space where historians can avoid such politicisation. As Carr (1987) asserts, most historians have "bees in their bonnet, [...] when you read a work of history, always listen out for the buzzing" (Carr, 1987: 23). There is a particular need to "listen out for the buzzing" when dealing with historical narratives emerging from competing ethnic nationalisms. These accounts are themselves structured around myth-making and historical interpretation as nations "loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future" (Anderson, 2003: 19). As Hobsbawm (1997) comments:

[...] myth and invention are not merely bad intellectual jokes [...] they are essential to the politics of identity by which groups [...] try to find some certainty in an uncertain and shaking world by saying, 'We are different from and better than Others'

(Hobsbawm, 1997: 9-10)

Udovički (2000) uses the term "mythologisation" to describe the manipulation of political discourse in the build-up to conflict in Yugoslavia over the late 1980s. She supports this with the examples of Slobodan Milošević exploiting the anniversary of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo to remind the Serb population of their victimization, and President Tudjman "evoked early medieval kings – Tomislav from the tenth century, Kresimir and Zvonimir from the eleventh – as paleo-emblems of Croatian statehood" (Udovički, 2000: 3). As competing historical accounts were used to justify national claims (while excluding others) Udovički suggests that "we had all together too much past" (Udovički, 2000: 3). As discourses of nationalism dominated political debate across Yugoslavia, any illusion of historical objectivity disappeared as 'the past' was utilised as a tool for invoking specific claims for self-determination. In this way, the explicit interpretation of the historical narrative can act as a 'signpost' to the ideological standpoint of the individual historian or politician. Indeed, within an Open Society Fund collection of one hundred accounts from children who escaped the conflict in Sarajevo the young authors are left anonymous explicitly "to deter readers from reading their nationality

and trying to ‘decipher’ them ideologically” (Lesić, 1995: 17).

However, an examination of historical sources, and the need to “decipher them ideologically”, extends beyond authors from the Former Yugoslavia. The conflict of 1991-1995 has provoked a vast array of literature on the Former Yugoslavia, characterised not by the invocation of a national “imagined community” (Anderson, 2003), but rather by an imagined space: ‘the Balkans’. This work has often been guided by a notion of ‘the Balkans’ as a synonym for a reversion to “the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian” (Todorova, 1997: 3). Wolff (1994) examines how Eastern Europe as a whole has been characterised as a ‘land of shadows’, with Winston Churchill’s invocation of the ‘Iron Curtain’ as a “barrier of quarantine” as the quintessential twentieth century example (Wolff, 1994: 2). Wolff goes on to suggest that these factors have meant that many studies in the region have been projects in ‘philosophic geography’, where it is not actually necessary to travel to Eastern Europe in order to participate in its intellectual discovery (Wolff, 1994: 7). Maria Todorova (1997) uses the term ‘Balkanism’, drawing on Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), to suggest that the Balkans have served as a “repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the “European” and the “West” has been constructed” (Todorova, 1997: 188). Yugoslav writer Ivo Andrić, in ‘The Days of the Consuls’¹ (1941), a story of a French Consul posted in the central Bosnian town of Travnik, alludes to such ‘Balkanism’ when he describes the first impressions of the young French diplomat on arrival in Bosnia:

The land was wild, the people impossible. What could be expected of women and children, creatures whom God had not endowed with reason, in a country where even the men were violent and uncouth? Nothing these people did or said had any significance, nor could it affect the affairs of serious, cultivated men.

(Andrić, 1941: 24)

Examples of Balkanism within ‘Western’ media and literature abound.

¹ First published as ‘The Travnik Chronicle’ (1941).

Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (1994), complete with faded sepia cover, suggests a haunted world located somehow beyond history. When Tony Blair announced that "Kosovo was on the doorstep of Europe" (quoted in Glenny, 1999: xxi) he exposed a 'philosophic geography' that resonated with the popular conception of the Balkans as a liminal space between Europe and the Orient. In *Untangling Bosnia* (1997) accountant Gale Kirking, who by his own admission knew nothing of Bosnia prior to driving there in 1998, exemplifies Balkanism's self-congratulatory tone:

[...] it seems a good idea to emphasise to local people that foreigners are paying to rebuild what the people of the former Yugoslavia have destroyed. Perhaps that will deter them from smashing it up again.

(Kirking, 1999: 71)

There are no shortage of examples of Balkanism in policy literature and academic texts, and it is just as pervasive within popular media such as books, television and film. In *The Secret of Chimneys* (1925) Agatha Christie used the fictional Balkan land of "Herzoslovakia" as a homeland for the villain Boris Anchoukoff, a country where the national "hobby" is "assassinating kings and having revolutions" (Christie, 1925: 105). The use of a fictional name, a fusion of Herzegovina and Slovakia, seems to suggest that the Balkans are "so hopelessly and intrinsically confused and impenetrable that there is scarcely any point in trying to distinguish between them" (Fleming, 2003: 1). In 2002, I watched *Bad Company* (Dir. Joel Schumacher, 2002), a Hollywood buddy cop film, in a cinema in Banja Luka, the capital of the Republika Srpska. The story involved police officers chasing a criminal gang who had stolen a laptop with the arming device to a nuclear weapon. A groan was let out amongst the cinema audience when the criminal gang were exposed as a group of Serb terrorists (complete with stubble and generic 'East European' accents). While providing an example of the characterisation of the

Balkans as a region of criminality and deviance, on another level my sudden concern for my safety in the cinema points to the pervasiveness of the stereotyping inherent in Balkanism. This Hollywood strategy is exemplary of a trend of circumventing accusations of racism, as “it has become illegitimate to bash non-white races, non-Christian religions, and non-European societies” (Todorova, 1997: 187).

Therefore any historical investigation faces on the one hand a decontextualization of the Balkans through the spread of terms such as “Balkanisation” that create an “abstract demon” (Todorova, 1997: 36) separate from an ontological base, and on the other the deployment of myth and partial histories to pursue particular political interests. Bose (2002) rightly suggests that these essentialisms and binary dichotomies “do enormous violence to complex Bosnian realities” (Bose, 2002: 10). This suggests that what is required is an appreciation of complexity, of over-lapping and contingent pasts, in short not too much emphasis should be placed on “what Bosnia was ‘really’ like” but rather that there were “several Bosnia and Herzegovinas which coexisted and were in tension with one-another” (Burg and Shoup, 1999: 60). One area where portrayal of such tension and complexity has perhaps been most successful has been within works of fiction, a resource that Ivo Banać called (when drawing upon it for a similar historiographical purpose) “imaginative literature” (Banać, 1988: xii). Films such as *No Man’s Land* (1999, dir. Danis Tanović), *Pretty Village*, *Pretty Flame* (1997, dir. Srđan Dragojević) and *Underground* (1995, dir. Emir Kusturica) have sought to use detailed characterisations, metaphor and allegory to portray the Former Yugoslavian society and history. In Theo Angelopoulos’ *Ulysses’ Gaze* (1995) the return of a film director to Greece in search of unseen footage from the early twentieth century is used as metaphorical device to explore the innocence of the filmmakers’ gaze, particularly with reference to the ethnic and social divisions across the Balkan Peninsula. Ironically, one reviewer of this film displays Balkanism’s tendency to view this region as an area of insecurity and danger by asking “why would he risk going to the Balkens [sic] to find rare film footage?”²

² Taken from the Internet Movie Database at www.imdb.com [accessed 8/4/04].

Nuanced and creative representations of the Balkans are not restricted to the cinema. Similar themes and devices can be found within the literary work of authors such as Meša Selimović and Ivo Andrić. It is Andrić's Nobel Prize winning *The Bridge on the Drina* (2000) that is perhaps the most famous fictional history of the region, where the construction and lifespan of a stone bridge in Višegrad, eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, is used to trace one thousand years of history on the Balkan Peninsula. While it should be noted that these fictional works are not above being "deciphered ideologically"³, their ability to translate complexity and conflict have led them to question dominant nationalist discourses and how they are constructed and transmitted.

It is not only works of fiction that have resisted Balkanistic tendencies. Tone Bringa's (1995) *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* provides an important ethnographic study of how multiculturalism is lived in the Balkans, offering a welcome alternative to Balkanistic descriptions of a 'haunted' or 'barbaric' land. By focussing on individual lives and struggles of the population, Bringa avoids reducing Bosnian history to a series of unquestioned nationalist or geopolitical images and instead examines the construction of hybrid or multicultural identities. The challenge of this chapter is to write a history of Brčko as such a lived and real location, a place that is more than 'strategically sensitive' or a 'flashpoint'. At the same time, it is essential to introduce the geopolitical and nationalist discourses that have shaped the position of Brčko as a site of international intervention. This historical challenge begins with the early histories of the region. Their distance in time has not diminished their importance as a rallying point for nationalist leaders.

³ See for example the discussions of the imagery and politics in *The Bridge on the Drina* in Hawkesworth (2002).

3.3 Early Histories

There is no such thing as a racially homogenous province there, let alone a racially homogenous state [...] One reason for studying the early history of the region is that it enables us to see that even if it were right to conduct modern politics in terms of ancient racial origins, it would simply not be possible [...] Nowhere is this more true than in the history of Bosnia.

(Malcolm, 1994: 1)

Brčko is located in the floodplain of the river Sava on the edge of the Dinaric Alps on the Balkan Peninsula of South East Europe (see Map 3.1). The concept of a homogeneous 'Balkan Peninsula' was first suggested by geographer Johann August Zeune in 1808, after the erroneous assumption that the Balkan range of mountains stretched from present-day Bulgaria to the Adriatic, rather than tapering out in present-day Serbia as is the case (Glenny, 1999: xiii). The earliest known inhabitants of the peninsula are the Illyrians, a loose collection of tribes that covered the area of former Yugoslavia and Albania and spoke an Indo-European language related to modern Albanian (Malcolm, 1994: 2; Wilkes, 1992). Following their conquest of the Illyrian lands in the third century AD, the Romans transformed the peninsula with the construction of a network of roads and settlements (Wilkes, 1992: 205). In the seventh century there is evidence of migrations of Croats from the Adriatic coast settling in an area of land roughly coterminous with contemporary Croatia. At a similar time the Serbs settled in the Western part of the Balkan Peninsula. Following the division of the Roman Empire in 395 AD, the Croats fell under the influence of Catholic Rome, the Serbs increasingly hosted missionaries from Orthodox Constantinople (Judah, 2000: 9). The influence of St Cyril, an eighth century Greek missionary to the Serbs, is still felt today through his translation of the Gospels and Orthodox liturgy, thus establishing the Cyrillic alphabet (Locke, 2002: xiv). Echoing the division of the Roman Empire, the Serbs, Bulgars and

Russians adopted the Cyrillic script, their Croat and Muslim neighbours retained the Latinic alphabet. This alphabetic polarisation was played upon in the late 1980s as “nationalists bewailed the fact that many Serbs in Croatia were becoming assimilated because they did not know how to write in Cyrillic” (Judah, 2000: 44).



Map 3.1 The Balkan Peninsula

(Source: adapted from www.history.uiuc.edu/fac_dir/todorova/index.htm
accessed 13/09/04)

In the eleventh century the Serbian kingdom emerged in the mountainous terrain of present-day Montenegro. In the 1160s, Stephan Nemanja founded a dynasty that was to last 200 years and created an “expanding Serbian state that was to become a major power in the Balkans” (Judah, 2000: 9). However, with the death

of Tsar Dušan in 1355 the Serbian kingdom began to disintegrate. By 1371, the Serbs experienced their first defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, an event that was to be repeated with far greater historical portent in the Battle of Kosovo Polje ('The Field of the Blackbirds') in 1389. The Battle of Kosovo has become the focal point to discussions of Serbian history. How this has occurred, with its roots in Serbian epic poetry, mythologizing the death of Prince Lazar and the associated nationalist discourses of a 'kingdom in heaven', is perhaps more interesting than the historical attributes of the battle itself. The conflict represented the next phase of the Ottoman penetration into Europe and resulted in the death of both the Ottoman Sultan Murad and the Serbian Prince Lazar. The Battle has been mythologised as a turning point in Serbian history, and particularly a moment where Prince Lazar chose an eternal 'kingdom in heaven' over a temporal 'kingdom on earth'. This attribute to Kosovo is captured within Serbian epic song, a highly developed oral folk tradition that was first gathered in a major collection by Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864). Geoffrey Locke (2002), in the foreword to a new English language edition of Serbian epic song, points to the key facets of historical significance and imagery that the Battle of Kosovo encapsulates:

[...] the Serbian perception was that it was at Kosovo that they had thrown everything they had into the balance, and that it was there that the flower of their chivalry and manhood had sacrificed itself in a final effort to defend the nation from slavery and Europe from Islamic domination [...] they saw that before Kosovo they had been an independent and justifiably proud kingdom: after it nothing could halt their decline into vassaldom under a foreign and heathen occupier, stripped of their wealth and dignity, but never their pride.

(Locke, 2002: xvii)

To invoke the spirit of Kosovo, then, is to touch the nerve of Serbian victimhood, a potent historical myth that would play a leading part in the rise of nationalist political parties six hundred years later. The significance of this battle (and epic poetry) was impressed upon me while walking through Brčko town in September 2001 with Dragana, my research assistant, who is a Bosnian Serb. As we

walked past a small theatre in the centre of town, a building which held a number of Serb cultural associations, Dragana told me that while she was at school (in 1999) she had come second in a poetry recital there. I asked more about this cultural event:

AJ: Which poem won?

D: Oh, a girl doing a poem about Kosovo and all that.

AJ: Do you think you should have done a poem on Kosovo?

D: I did, it was just that hers was longer.

(Extract from field journal 14th November 2002)

While the centrality of the battle within Serbian mythology is unquestioned, some contemporary analysts have cast doubt over the significance of Kosovo Polje to the more general history of the region. The immediate historical consequences appear to have been negligible and the battle is perhaps best seen as “more of a draw”, rather than a heroic defeat for the Serbs marking the beginning of several centuries under the Ottoman rule (Kumar, 2000: 3). Misha Glenny (1999) points out that Serbian power collapsed gradually over the following sixty years and “[t]he fortress in Belgrade did not fall under Ottoman control until the sixteenth century” (Glenny, 1999: 11).

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Brčko area is first mentioned in historical documents as the location of a Turkish palisade fortress on the banks of the river Sava, located in what is now North East Bosnia and Herzegovina. The name derives from the town’s location on the mouth of the river Brka, which flows from the slopes of mount Majavica to the south and into the River Sava at Brčko. The surrounding fertile floodplain, known as the Posavina region (literally ‘around the Sava’), favoured agriculture and the area became known for the production of dried fruit and *Rakija* (plum brandy). The development of the Brčko region was

influenced by its role as a borderland, with the Sava providing a natural boundary for the Ottoman (up to the mid 19th Century) and then Austro-Hungarian Empires (from 1876 to 1918). In the past the river has been regarded as continental boundary, much like the Turkish Bosphorus is viewed today, as the historian Sir Arthur Evans (1877) suggests:

The Bosniacs themselves speak of the other side of the Save [sic] as “Europe” and they are right; for all intents and purposes a five minutes’ voyage transports you into Asia. Travellers who have seen the Turkish provinces of Syria, Armenia, or Egypt, when they enter Bosnia are at once surprised at finding the familiar sights of Asia and Africa reproduced in a province of Turkey.

(Evans, 1877: 89)

During the 19th Century there were regular insurrections by forces from both Empires into the Posavina area, leading to marked economic and social consequences for the development of Brčko. In economic terms, the town grew as a trading post and port facility, benefiting from cross-border profiteering, as the river provided safe passage to Belgrade and the Danube away from the marauding gangs of *hajduci* (armed bandits) patrolling the countryside. In social terms, the transition from one imperial control to another led to significant population transfers. An example is the fall of the Ottoman Empire in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1876, which saw “hundreds of thousands of refugees swamp...the border areas of the Hapsburg [Austro-Hungarian] Empire” (Glenny, 1999: 124). These demographic shifts have left ‘border areas’ such as the Posavina with ethnically mixed populations, as will be discussed in the case of Brčko later in this chapter.

The emergence of the region’s modern geopolitics can be traced to the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following World War I. The latter part of the 19th Century had seen growing support for the unification of the Southern Slavs, or Yugoslavism, through visions of national liberation, modernization and the development of characteristics deemed unique to South Slav culture on the Balkan Peninsula (Prpa-Jovanović, 2000: 44). This movement had emerged amongst

Croatian intellectuals in the 1840s as 'Illyrianism' (after the oldest known tribe known to have inhabited the Balkan Peninsula), calling for ethnic and political unity of the Southern Slavs. There were, however, varied motivations for Yugoslavism among the two largest Slav groups, the Croats and the Serbs. For Croat intellectuals, Yugoslavism formed a central strand of a broad goal of stimulating a Croatian cultural renaissance in order to overthrow Austro-Hungarian rule (Cohen, 1995: 2). In Serbia, the Prime Minister Ilija Garašanin set out his motivations for support of Yugoslavism in the 1844 publication *Načertanije*, or Memorandum. This document, which only became public in 1906, called for the unification of all areas of the Balkans with large Serbian populations, amounting to a blueprint for an expanded 'Greater Serbia' (MacKenzie, 1996: 216). For most Serbs, then, the idea of South Slav unity before World War I was a useful concept only to the extent that it might facilitate and hasten the achievement of Serbia's distinct national and territorial goals (Cohen, 1995: 6-7). These differing motivations between Serbs and Croats were perhaps most acute where concerned with the territory of Bosnia:

[...] when it came to regions with ethnically mixed populations such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Serbs and Croats had advanced sharply conflicting territorial claims, even genuine advocates of the Yugoslav idea could find little ground.

(Cohen, 1995: 7)

With growing support for Yugoslavism, albeit with potentially conflicting motivations, new alliances in the early 20th Century began to alter the geopolitical power bases within the region. First, in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 the Balkan League (comprising Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria), with the support of Russia, drove the Ottomans out of Europe and then went on to divide the territory of Macedonia. Following this success against the Ottoman Turks, self-confidence amongst the Serbs ran high, as they "saw themselves cutting loose from the decaying corpse of an empire and uniting with a young and triumphant democratic state" (West, 1940: 355). These victories seemed to shift the orientation of Croatian and Slovenian commitment to the Yugoslav idea as the growing strength of Serbia in the

Balkans was viewed with suspicion. While still calling for the unification of the Slavs, it was suggested that this could take place through the Hapsburg monarchy, thus avoiding direct union with the Serbian state. These calls represent an interesting mobilisation of 'empire', as opposed to 'the state', as a practice through which competing nationalisms could be accommodated. Within such an imperialist Slav alliance the status of Bosnia appeared uncertain.

The question of Bosnia, and more broadly Slav unity, was to leave an indelible mark on both European and global geopolitics through the assassination of the Hapsburg Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. The perpetrator, Gavrilo Princep, was a member of *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia), "a loose association of youthful and nationalistic Bosnian Serbs" (MacKenzie: 1996, 247). Austria-Hungary did not wait long to respond and, amid accusations of sponsoring the assassination, declared war on Serbia on July 28th 1914. As Germany supported the Austro-Hungarian cause, and with Great Britain, Russia and France rallying to the Serb side, this theatre of conflict marked the beginning of World War I. The chaos and violence of this conflict, which pitched the Southern Slavs against each other, saw the loss of an estimated 1 900 000 lives in the region. However, the war also resulted in the collapse of Austria-Hungary, leaving the political conditions for the unification of the Southern Slavs. Such an outcome had become a reality through the Yugoslav Committee, an exiled collection of Croat, Serb and Slovene politicians, whose work culminated in the Corfu Declaration of 1917 calling for a democratic constitutional monarchy uniting Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Prpa-Jovanović, 2000: 49). This declaration was the precursor to the formal recognition of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on December 1st 1918, later renamed Yugoslavia⁴.

Brčko no longer found itself on the imperial border, but at the edge of Bosnia, which with Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Serbia, made up the new Kingdom. The constitution of the multi-ethnic kingdom described the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as "three tribes" of the same nation. This left Muslims, the majority of

⁴ This state is often referred to as 'the first Yugoslavia' to act as a distinction to socialist 'the second Yugoslavia' formed in 1945.

Bosnia's (and Brčko's) population, with little voice, as although they were authorised to practice their religion and form political parties, they were not considered a "tribe" or a nation. Establishing the legitimacy and maintaining the cohesion of a state composed of such varied historical traditions and sub-cultural groups represented a substantial challenge for the country's political leadership (Cohen, 1995: 13). The political system in the kingdom was prone to misunderstanding, distrust and intolerance, as the liberal democratic principle of 'one-person, one vote' enabled the most numerous nation – the Serbs – to outvote and dominate the others (Jelavich and Jelavich, 1977: 38). The concentration of power in Serbia led to protests among the Slovenian and Croatian political elite, who had not fought to overthrow centralism from Hapsburg Vienna to have it replaced by reorganised centralism from Belgrade. In a climate of deteriorating economic conditions, reorganisation of the Yugoslavian state was a certainty, and throughout the 1920s and 1930s Croat politicians lobbied Belgrade to increase the autonomy of Croatia. A turning point in this political struggle came with the assassination of the Serbian King Aleksandar Karađjordjević in Marseilles in October 1934 at the hands of Croatian and Macedonian extremists. This event focused the campaigns against Serb domination and eventually led to an accord between Serbia and Croatia on August 26, 1939. However, this agreement failed as Croat politicians were angered by the limited nature of their autonomy and Serbian politicians by the loss of their domination, the abandonment of centralism, and the new division of administrative powers (Prpa-Jovanović, 2000: 57).

3.4 Tito's Yugoslavia

These political conflicts were overshadowed by the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. Though Yugoslavia was not envisaged as part of Hitler's *Lebensraum*, between 1939 and 1940 Germany placed considerable political pressure (with the threat of violence) on the Balkan Peninsula, primarily with a view to Romania's valuable oil supplies (Glenny, 1999: 458-459). Yugoslavia maintained a neutral position in these early years of the conflict and, as such, became the focus

of considerable lobbying and enticements from both the Allied and Axis powers. Early 1941 saw a change of tactic, as the German invasion of Romania and Hungary increased insecurity within Yugoslavia. As an attempt to prevent an attack, Yugoslavia signed up to the Tripartite Pact with Germany. However, this act provoked a *coup d'état* on March 27th 1941, led by the head of the Yugoslav Air Force, General Dušan Simović. This popular uprising met little opposition from forces loyal to King Aleksandar, the head of the Yugoslav state, as “they saw no point in resisting” (Glenny, 1999: 474). Rather bizarrely, while this coup had been based on opposition to the Tripartite Pact, once General Dušan Simović seized control he decided, perhaps pragmatically considering the army ranged against them, to honour the pact. However, this was too late for the Führer who had become “irritated by the intricacies of Balkan politics” and ordered the bombing of Belgrade on the 6th April, 1941 (Glenny, 1999: 476). Hitler and Mussolini abolished the country of Yugoslavia less than two weeks later, partitioning its territory between Germany and Italy (Prpa-Jovanović, 2000: 57). The conflict within Yugoslavia during the Second World War could perhaps best be described as ‘all against all’, with “terror on a horrifying scale” (Glenny, 1999: 486). Following the creation of the Independent State of Croatia (Nevavisna Drzava Hrvatska or NDH) across an area roughly equitable with present-day Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia, pro-Axis Ustaše (‘Insurrectionists’) emerged out of the extremist wing of Croatian nationalism and attacked Serb Četniks (‘Irregulars’) led by Dragoljub ‘Draža’ Mihailović and loyal to the King (who, along with the rest of the Serbian royal family, sought exile in London). However, in Belgrade a rival resistance force began to emerge from the Communist party, a negligible and persecuted political presence during the 1920s and 1930s. This group, led by the half-Croat, half-Slovene Josip Broz under the *nom de guerre* Tito⁵, urged partisan warfare (gaining them the name ‘the Partisans’) and sought to defend the ideal of Southern Slav unity. This ideology was one factor in their successful resistance: it constituted a moderate alternative to

⁵ MacLean (1949) recalls how Tito gained this name on account of continually telling people what to do: “‘you’ he said to them ‘will do this; and you, that,’ in Serbo-Croat, ‘Ti, to; ti, to’. He said this so often that his friends began to call him Tito” (MacLean, 1949: 311).

the ultranationalist causes of the Croat Ustaše the Serb Četniks'. In addition to their broad support base, the Partisan movement also gained the backing of the Allied forces, traditionally supporters of the Draza Mihailović's Četniks. In *Eastern Approaches* (1949), a remarkable account of British Secret Service manoeuvres during the Second World War, Fitzroy MacLean describes this changing allegiance:

Information reaching the British Government from a variety of sources had caused them to doubt whether the resistance of General Mihailović and his Četniks to the enemy was all that it was made out to be. There were indications that at least as much was being done by armed bands bearing the name Partisans and led by a shadowy figure known as Tito. Hitherto such support as we had been able to give had gone exclusively to Mihailović. Now doubts as to the wisdom of this policy were beginning to creep in.

(MacLean, 1949: 279)

The Allied support for the explicitly Communist Partisans involved "swallowing ideological scruples" (Zimmerman, 1996: 6), particularly as the Serbs (as represented in this conflict in Mihailović's Četniks) had been staunch supporters of Great Britain in World War I. Nevertheless, "they weren't killing the most Germans" (MacLean, 1949: 281) and following the capitulation of Italy in September 1943 supply lines were established across the Adriatic to assist Tito's Partisan forces. On November 29, 1943, the wartime Partisan parliament convened in the Bosnian town of Jajce, liberated from the German occupiers, and voted for a new Yugoslavia that would, in its final form, be a federation of six republics, with two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, joined to Serbia (see Map 3.2). Under Allied pressure, the exiled royal government backed the Jajce Declaration and, in September 1944, broadcast an appeal to "all Yugoslav patriots to rally to Tito" (Singleton, 1976: 96). Mihailović made frantic efforts during 1944 to wrest the political initiative from Tito, particularly in the form of the proposals emerging from the Ba Congress of January 1944. However, these attempts were destined to be unsuccessful in the face of growing international recognition, and acceptance, of Tito's Partisans as a government-in-waiting. Indeed, Soviet troops entered

Yugoslavia from Romania and Bulgaria and assisted the Partisans in liberating Belgrade on 20th October 1944.



Map 3.2 Yugoslavia after 1945

(Source: Adapted from Glenny, 1999: xx)

While the Belgrade liberation marked triumph over the invading Axis powers, it did not translate for Tito into complete victory over domestic military enemies. During 1945 Tito struck at Ustaše and Četnik forces with savage brutality. He used these attacks to justify the rapid growth and unchecked authority of the Partisans' wartime security service, the Organisation for the People's Defence (OZNa), with an explicit remit to "strike terror into the hearts of those who did not like this sort of Yugoslavia" (Lampe, 1996: 223; Glenny, 1999: 531). The focus of this purge of opponents, initially fixed on pro-Axis war criminals, shifted to include

suppression of what it viewed as 'reactionary nationalistic tendencies', particularly in Croatia and Kosovo (Tepavać, 2000: 65). It is estimated that over the period of 1945-1947 as many as 100 000 people across Yugoslavia were executed, with many more interned for their wartime activities or political views (Lampe, 1996: 223). In total the conflict had resulted in the death of 1 700 000 of the Yugoslav population. In the shadow of this five-year conflict, and with the shaping of a unified state in mind, Tito drew on the slogan *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* ('Brotherhood and Unity') to unite Yugoslavia. The slogan embodied a policy of equality between the nations of Yugoslavia. In this respect, Tito sought to equalise the blame for the atrocities that had been carried out by the Ustaše, Četnik and Nazi forces during World War II. The commemoration of the conflict was based more on the heroics of the Partisans against a 'fascist enemy', than seeking to present the multiple lines of difference that fractured the population over the five years of war (Judah, 2000).

To confirm, rather than to threaten, Tito's grip on power, elections were held in 1945 with the professed intention of granting the Yugoslav population the opportunity to vote on their country's future. In reality, and unsurprisingly considering the activities of the OZNa in crushing nationalist opposition through internment and summary execution, the ballot box choices in this post war election amounted to a vote for Tito's Communist Party or, if you were keen to express opposition, ticking a blank box. Other political parties had either been disenfranchised (often for claims of wartime collaboration with the Četniks or Ustaše) or had excluded themselves from the election out of protest (Lampe, 1996: 226). Following the 'election', Communist representatives dominated the Constituent Assembly which first convened in Belgrade on November 29, 1945. The delegates voted unanimously to abolish the monarchy, ending the regency of the exiled King Petar II, in whose name Tito had ruled since March of that year (Lampe, 1996: 229). The new Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (SNRJ) now took its place. Tito drew up a constitution mirroring closely Stalin's Soviet model of 1936, while making specific clauses to help foster his vision for Yugoslavian unity. Malcolm (1994) points out how attempts to devolve power to the six Republics were contradicted within the constitution itself:

It [the constitution] contained the usual mixture of fine-sounding declarations and logical black holes, proclaiming, for example, that each constituent republic was 'sovereign', but also eliminating the right to secede by declaring that the peoples of Yugoslavia had decided to live together for ever.

(Malcolm, 1994: 194)

In reality the constitution of 1946 established a Yugoslavian state that was, initially at least, highly centralised. The ruling principle of the constitution was that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, exercised by the ruling party in the name of the workers. The controlling hand of the Socialist party was evident at all levels of political, economic and cultural life, though the party itself was not mentioned in the constitution (Singleton, 1976: 106). This socialist rhetoric was matched by a radical reorganisation of the post-war Yugoslavian economy with the nationalisation of industry and, albeit at a slower pace, collectivisation of agriculture. In the early years of the new Yugoslav state, Stalinism was enforced with great brutality (Glenny, 1999: 551). However, the enthusiasm for Soviet methods of 'iron rule' masked a growing schism between Tito and Stalin. There are many different opinions as to the roots of the split between these two leaders. Some, such as Allcock (2000) primarily view the conflict as an economic issue emerging out of Yugoslav dissatisfaction with the terms of trade between their country and the Soviet Union (Allcock, 2000: 71). Others see the dispute as a reflection of Stalin's general disapproval of the independence and self-confidence of Yugoslavia, and in particular his anger at criticisms levelled by members of the Yugoslav government at the conduct of the Red Army in Belgrade (in particular their treatment of the Yugoslav population) during the final days of World War II (Tepavać, 2000: 66). Whatever the underlying cause, the rift between the two countries led to a terse exchange of letters over 1948 that resulted in the ejection of Yugoslavia from the Cominform

(Communist Information Bureau⁶). Lydall (1984) summarises the accusations levelled at the Yugoslav government in these letters:

The Yugoslav Party leaders were accused of deviation from Marxism-Leninism, of being hostile to the Soviet Union and the Soviet Party, of borrowing from 'the arsenal of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism', of becoming nationalists, of ignoring the class struggle in agriculture, of disguising the role of the Party, of refusing to accept criticism, and of 'boundless ambition, arrogance and conceit'.

(Lydall, 1984: 62)

It is clear from the reaction of the Yugoslavian leadership that the split with Stalin was unexpected, and the almost instant economic impact left the country's five year plan, instituted to deliver rapid industrialisation, in disarray. The Soviet bloc attempted to teach the "arrogant and conceited" leadership a lesson by enforcing an economic blockade that, by 1950, had halted all trade between Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe (Lydall, 1984: 63). In the face of economic crisis, Tito was faced with a dilemma. On the domestic front he was keen to increase the pace of agricultural collectivisation "demonstrating that it was not Yugoslavia but the Soviet Union and its allies that had strayed from the path of Stalinist orthodoxy" (Glenny, 1999: 547). However, in order to survive Yugoslavia had to move closer to the West to attract foreign aid and foster trading links. An attempt to meet these apparently contradictory domestic and international objectives was forged through a reappraisal of centralised Soviet practice. This process involved denouncing the Soviet socialist system as a 'bureaucratic deformation' of Marxist principles due to the vast centralised power of the state over the economy (Lydall, 1984: 62). In order to circumscribe the centralised role of the state, a system of 'workers self-management' was proposed in 1949, suggesting a move away from centralisation and toward workers' councils and self-managed enterprises. Initially these broad intentions appear to have been merely rhetoric with little real power being devolved to the workers, whose contribution was limited to representation on advisory bodies

⁶ Stalin's postwar coordinating body of nine European Communist parties.

(Singleton, 1976: 126). However, this changed with the passing of new laws and constitutional reforms over the following decade, in particular the Law of the Management of State Economic Associations by Work Collectives in 1950 and the new constitution of 1953. This legislation saw certain authority passed to local level *opištine* (communes or municipalities), including powers of taxation and control over the affairs of certain business enterprises within their territory (Allcock, 2000: 77).

These developments provoked a distinct post-Stalin Yugoslavian foreign policy. In light of its greater independence, coupled with the signs of a more participatory form of governance (albeit with a lingering lacunae for human rights abuses), Western powers saw the benefit of closer ties to this European socialist anomaly. In recognition of this new geopolitical position, Tito helped establish the Non-Aligned Movement, eventually launched in 1954-55 with member-states from across Asia, Africa and Latin America. This movement was 'non-aligned' in its broad neutrality between the capitalist and Soviet powers. This position of independence, while open to the entire world, proved vital in preventing a Soviet attack on Yugoslavia while also encouraging overseas aid, trade and investment (Tepavać, 2000: 71). Non-alignment and greater proximity to the West meant that during the 1950s overseas aid underpinned an ambitious scheme of Yugoslavian industrialisation (in favour of other sectors such as agriculture), while also subsidising consumption, "especially that of the state" (Allcock, 2000: 75). While these aspects were to lead to economic problems in the future, such as balance-of-payment deficits and inflationary pressure, the Yugoslav economy grew faster from 1953 to 1961 than most others in the world, including those of the Soviet bloc (Lampe, 1996: 272). In the case of Brčko, this period marks a phase of modernisation of production facilities in the town as small-scale handicraft enterprises were replaced by large-scale industry (Brčko Development Agency, 2002: 18). This shift was exemplified by the construction of the large meat canning factory 'Bimeks', together with footwear and textile factories. These developments were replicated across Yugoslavia, and by 1961 industrial production was increasing by 13 percent per annum, leading commentators to talk in economic terms of a

“great leap forward” (Dyker, 1990: 28).

However, this macro industrial optimism masked two underlying economic and social phenomena that, together, are thought to have contributed to the fall of Yugoslavia: increasing rural to urban migration and the growing economic disparity between the six republics of Yugoslavia. In terms of the migration from rural areas, from 1948 to 1971 the ratio of rural to urban population throughout the country changed from 70:30 to 40:60 (Singleton, 1976: 222-223). By the 1980s this phenomenon was widely being described as a ‘rural exodus’ (McFarlane, 1988). Much of this migration can be attributed to the ambitious industrialisation programme, which led to a decline in the proportion of the economically active population engaged in agriculture, from 67 percent at the end of the Second World War to 38 percent by the census of 1971 (Allcock, 2000: 89).

The migration of large sections of the population from rural to urban areas was more than an economic phenomenon. Slavenka Drakulić (1996) describes the rural to urban resettlement in Eastern Europe following the Second World War as a “giant leap from feudalism to communism” (Drakulić, 1996: 36). Glenny (1999) suggests that Yugoslav society was particularly polarised as a consequence of its exposure to Western Europe which “accentuated the cultural divisions between rural and urban life as nowhere else in the Communist Balkans” (Glenny, 1999: 628). These cultural divisions between the rural and the urban were depicted by research participants at a number of stages in the fieldwork process. One UN worker from Sarajevo, who had grown up in the southern city of Mostar, explained the significance of this division after mentioning a village she had recently visited:

Her village is a Croat village amongst Bosnijak villages. But it is a pure Croat village, you would never have a Muslim person moving into this village. This is how it stayed during Socialism, villages stayed as they were, they were purely Catholic, purely Muslim or purely this, purely that [...] While in the city you have experience over generations of people living with each other, together. And the urban was a common culture, an urban culture and people shared so many moments. They were completely mixed, there was no Muslim part of town or Serb part of town [...] And these people didn't know who others were in a way, you had urban people who were cool and mixed and lived together and went to school together. And this is how you can explain it also. Obviously urban people had more access to shared things. Just think of the all the educational, cultural, health, whatever, institutions where people worked together non-stop. Like in Mostar, the Mostarian Theatre, Mostarian Hospital, the Mostarian University.

(Interview with Saška Haramina, Brčko 22nd August 2002)

The patchwork of mono-ethnic villages, as described in this passage, was evident in pre-1991 Brčko District. The 1991 Yugoslav census points to the multi-ethnicity of the population of the Brčko municipality: 44 percent Bosnijak⁷, 26 percent Catholic and 21 percent Serbs, with 6 percent recognising themselves as Yugoslav, and 3 percent other, mainly Roma, though this distribution was not evenly spaced over the Brčko municipality (an area of 427 km²). Prior to the 1991-1995 conflict the urban population was majority Bosnijak, while the majority of the villages lying to the south were Serb or Croat. The broad picture across Yugoslavia was one of urban areas constituting centres of cosmopolitanism and population mix, while the countryside retained ethnic polarisation and depended upon peasant and subsistence agricultural production. As the economic and cultural disparity between rural and urban areas grew over the 1960s and 1970s, so too did mutual antipathy and distrust. Glenny (1999) views this friction as having an “enormous impact” on

⁷ Throughout this thesis the label ‘Bosnijak’ will be used to refer to Bosnian Muslims, though it should be stressed that not all Bosnijaks practice Islam and not all Bosnian Muslims would label themselves Bosnijak. The term ‘Bosnijak’ has unfortunate nationalist connotations, though it seems more satisfactory as a collective noun, rather than relying on religious labels for a predominantly secular group.

the Yugoslav wars of succession in the 1990s (Glenny, 1999: 588).

The second phenomenon that tempered the optimism of growing Yugoslavian industrial prosperity was the widening economic inequality between the six republics. The southern republics of Macedonia, Serbia (in particular the autonomous province of Kosovo), Montenegro, and Bosnia never had the economic success of Slovenia and Croatia, and under Tito's stewardship this inequality was growing. As an example, in 1952 GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita in Bosnia was 95.5 percent of the Yugoslav average, but by 1960 it had declined to 76 percent (Allcock, 2000: 83). While Croatia and Slovenia enjoyed proximity to the lucrative Italian and Austrian markets, sustained by the legacy of historic links to the Habsburg Empire, areas such as Kosovo were poorly industrialised and still reliant on agricultural production. Tito's regime had resisted investing in agriculture (beyond the bureaucratic requirements of collectivisation) preferring instead to appease vocal impoverished communities with the construction of 'political factories', that is, enterprises located more for their political expedience than economic efficiency. Such considerations are evident in the example of the Montenegrin plant designed to manufacture refrigerators located on a mountain top and only accessible by an unpaved road that was impassable for the better part of the year. The reason for its precarious positioning was the unwavering support by the local population for the Partisan cause during World War I and, perhaps equally as important, Montenegro was a hugely overrepresented republic in the Communist Party leadership (Lampe, 1996: 276).

As the republics urbanised and became increasingly insular over the 1960s, calls increased for a loosening of the centralised federal government and increasing 'republicanisation' (devolving power to the six republics) of the Yugoslav state. There was an emergent resentment amongst the Croatian economic elite, benefiting as they were from tourism along the Dalmatian coast, who felt that Croatia was "milked of the fruits of its economic success in order either to support economically dubious projects in the underdeveloped regions or to subsidise government profligacy in Belgrade" (Lampe, 1996: 90). These concerns solidified into wider calls for greater autonomy for the Croatian people and, echoing the claims made in

the last days of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the 1930s, accusations of subjugation of Croats under the political control of a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. Tito characteristically crushed this 1971-72 movement, known as the 'Croatian Spring', and its principal participants (mainly Croat scholars and academics) were imprisoned. Tito faced similar problems in Serbia where, in the wake of alleged oppression of Serbs by the majority Albanian (Kosovar) population in Kosovo, nationalist stirrings were causing unrest and rejection of Yugoslav principles of 'Brotherhood and Unity'. Again, this uprising was forcibly curtailed, though the sentiments of greater republican autonomy and calls for a democratization of the Yugoslav system were more difficult to silence.

Tito's solution lay in further amendments to the constitution and, finally, an entirely new Yugoslav constitution in 1974. This document, running to 406 articles (at the time the world's longest constitution), established a regimented, and highly confusing, pyramid hierarchy with Tito at its head. At the local level, six groupings (workers in the social sector; peasants and farm workers; liberal professionals; state officials and soldiers; local communities, and socio-political organisations) were eligible to send delegates to the next level above, the Assembly of the Commune (*opštine*) and the Assembly of the Republic. These bodies would then send delegates to the next level – the Federal Assembly. The notion of representation through delegates, as opposed to electoral competition and universal suffrage, was championed by Tito who suggested that "a determined break has been made with all the so-called representative democracy which suits the bourgeois class" (Tito, 1974: 46). In contrast, Lydall (1984) suggests that the delegate system appeared to be designed to stifle potential opposition:

[u]nder the system of delegations and the pyramid structure to higher bodies, coupled with the complete ban on organised opposition, there is no possibility of a candidate with an independent viewpoint and popular support entering a commune assembly, let alone the Federal Assembly.

(Lydall, 1984: 126)

In addition to the delegate system, the constitution devolved significant power to the republics, giving each a central bank and separate police, educational and judicial systems. It also gave these functions to Kosovo and Vojvodina which became 'autonomous provinces' within Serbia. Perhaps as a reaction to the recent nationalistic tendencies, these measures circumscribed Serb power within Yugoslavia, and the constitution was perceived to "cut Serbia down to size" (Silber and Little, 1995: 34). Significantly for Bosnia, the constitution granted the Bosnian Muslims the status of a constituent nationality (*Narodna*) of Yugoslavia (together with the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs). While this status did not translate to any concrete political representation within the Bosnian republic (in which they had a plurality), it did introduce specific measures for cultural and linguistic protection within the Yugoslav federation (a right that was conspicuously not extended to the Kosovar Albanians). While such constitutional reform would appear to indicate devolution of power from the centre, Tepavać (2000) suggests that in reality centralist power was "simply transferred to the level of the republic" (Tepavać, 2000: 72). In addition, the rotating system of representation at the federal level, established to "prevent any single republic or politician accumulating too much power" (Glenny, 1999: 623), proved confusing and was poorly understood by the Yugoslav population (Lampe, 1996: 306).

As the 1970s progressed, the worsening economic position of Yugoslavia was to overshadow constitutional debates. The economic decline of the federation was masked in the short-term by the import of capital (and the associated build-up of debt) and the export of labour, particularly in the form of *gastarbeitern* (guest workers) to Austria and Germany. In the wake of global oil price rises in 1973-74 and 1978-79, interest repayments on overseas loans increased, and, as unemployment rose in Western Europe, *gastarbeitern* began to return to Yugoslavia seeking work. The political changes necessary to alleviate the worsening economic position at the federal level looked increasingly difficult considering the frailty of Tito's leadership and the complex and over bureaucratised constitution. Somogyi (1993) suggests that by the late 1970s the federation was being run by "informal, non-elected, non-institutionalised, and uncontrollable oligarchies" (Somogyi, 1993:

46). Following Tito's death in 1980 the infighting between the republics continued, and in his place the rotating presidential system (as established by the 1974 constitution) further entrenched political stagnancy. Yugoslavia's precarious economic position began to impact upon the inflation rate over the early 1980s and by the end of 1984 it reached an annual rate of between 60 and 100 per cent, requiring some lower income Yugoslav families to spend 70 per cent of their monthly incomes on food (Ramet, 1985: 6). Lampe (1996) suggests that faced with these economic and political crises the republics, and their corresponding media, turned on each other:

The modern and therefore sensation-hungry media of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia exposed social problems and individual abuses of power, but stopped short of confronting their own republic's communist leadership. They suggested instead that the disadvantages suffered by their republic came at the others' advantage. Intellectuals growing restive over the spreading corruption tended to question the framework of the federation more than the troubled system of social ownership.

(Lampe, 1996: 326)

In this political and economic climate, the principle of 'Brotherhood and Unity' was again under threat. In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Science and the Arts leaked a Memorandum to a popular newspaper, a document that claimed that the Serbs were in an unjust position in Yugoslavia and were being exploited by Slovene and Croatian countrymen. In a phrase that would be repeated often over the following decade (with or without any grounding in the military realities), the Memorandum asserted that Serbia had "won the war but was losing the peace" (Silber and Little, 1995: 31). It went on to denounce the "creeping genocide" inflicted on the Serbs in the "cradle of Serbian culture", Kosovo (Zolo, 2000: 19). This call-to-arms unsettled the Yugoslav leadership, who almost unanimously denounced the document; one notable exception was Slobodan Milošević, then a young Socialist party chief and friend of the Serbian president Ivan Stambolić. Over the following years Milošević was to see first hand the power of nationalistic

discourse in winning the support of Serbs, first in Kosovo (the designated spiritual homeland of the Serbian people) and then across Yugoslavia. Following a televised parliamentary showdown with Stambolić in 1989, Milošević gained the Serbian leadership. He also managed to engineer the dissolution of the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. This meant that, with Montenegro, he held four of the eight votes in the Yugoslav parliament. The other four republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia) lacked any unity of opposition to Milošević's creation of what Misha Glenny (1999) describes as "Serbo-slavia" (Glenny, 1999: 628).

3.5 The Fall of Yugoslavia

As Slobodan Milošević rose to power within Serbia, the geopolitical position of Yugoslavia shifted in light of the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The status that Yugoslavia had enjoyed as a Cold War Socialist ally to the West was now of little strategic worth and, as a consequence, the preferential loan agreements and aid assistance were under threat. Further to these economic considerations, the revolutions across Central and Eastern Europe seemed to undermine the legitimacy of one-party Socialism as an acceptable form of rule and, as such, the Yugoslav League of Communists lost its mandate of political monopoly. As the Socialist system appeared threatened, conservative forces gathered behind nationalism as a means of political survival:

In nationalism, conservative forces found an instrument against fundamental social, political and economic change that threatened their social positions and privileges. All three social institutions (by their very nature the most conservative ones) – the party apparatus, the army, the state controlled media – rallied behind Slobodan Milošević.

(Udovički and Torov, 2000: 83)

The rise of nationalism in mainstream politics was not restricted to Serbia. In Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, a leader within the Croatian Spring 1971-72, swept to

power with his political party the HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokracija Zajednica*) in April 1990 on a pledge of “a Croatia for Croats only” (Lampe, 1996: 352). After only two months in office, Tudjman drew up a draft constitution for an independent Croatia. This document redefined Croatia as the sovereign state of the Croatian nation, with no reference to other nations or ethnic groups (Silber and Little, 1995: 96-97). These events were of portent for the large Serb population living in the area of Croatia known as the *Krajina* (or ‘borderland’). This area curved around the north-western tip of Bosnia and covered a vital strategic corridor between Zagreb and Split. Fear spread amongst the Serb population invigorated by propaganda from Belgrade inciting the memory of the war crimes of the Croatian Ustaše of World War II. Tudjman himself did not help, by claiming that “the NDH [the Independent State of Croatia formed under Hitler] was not simply a quisling creation and fascist crime; it was also the historical aspiration of the Croatian people” (cited in Stitkovać, 2000: 156). The actions of Tudjman in trying to give legitimacy to a pure Croatian state seemed to lend credibility to the claims of Milošević that “the Serbs could never feel safe again” (Stitkovać, 2000: 157). In the shadow of this political fervour, the situation on the ground in the *Krajina* degenerated over the summer of 1990 with the routes to each Serb-majority town guarded by gangs of armed civilians.

In December 1990, as a background to the deepening crisis between Croatia and Serbia, Slovenia held a referendum where 95 percent of the electorate voted for independence. Since coming to power in April the Slovenian Government, headed by Milan Kučan, had pursued a policy of intense diplomacy with a view to gaining international support for a declaration of independence. This proved a shrewd strategy as Europe stood divided and uncertain on the ‘Yugoslav question’. Austria and Germany were both in strong support of recognising both Slovenian and Croatian independence, a sign of the close historical relationships between these countries and, perhaps more importantly, recognition of their own status as potential refugee recipient states if Yugoslavia were to be destabilised. Britain, on the other hand, remained firmly opposed to the recognition of either Slovenia or Croatia, preferring instead to support the integrity of the Yugoslav international borders.

However, not for the last time in the Yugoslav conflicts of 1991-1995, events overtook the ponderous pace of European diplomacy. On July 25th 1991, Slovenia declared independence and rapidly took control of the borders of the republic, banishing federal officials and raising the recently designed Slovenian flag. These actions provoked a swift response from the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslavija Narodna Armija* or JNA), who found themselves in the unusual position of occupying foreign soil by merely staying in their barracks in Slovenia. The Slovenian Territorial Defence forces, trained and mobilised through the police force and local volunteers, barricaded the JNA in their barracks, cutting utility supplies and obstructing the re-supply of provisions. The JNA responded by mobilising battalions from Croatia and Serbia, directed by the Belgrade government to take back control of the borders and the international airport in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana. These manoeuvres handed a crucial public relations victory to the Slovenian government, as they portrayed themselves a plucky Western-orientated alpine country attempting to throw off the yoke of Socialist oppression, a theme that global audiences were sympathetic towards following the events across Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. Slovenian television completed this representation by juxtaposing images of tanks rolling towards the border with footage of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In reality, however, the deployment of the JNA was limited to fewer than 2000 troops and scarcely resembled a credible invading force. This is perhaps evidence of a clandestine agreement between Kučan and Milošević concerning Slovenian independence, forged as much as six months earlier at a meeting in Belgrade on January 24th 1991 (Silber and Little, 1995: 166). Slovenia, devoid as it was of a Serb minority, held little interest for Milošević. His attention turned to Croatia, in particular to the newly declared 'Serb Republic of the Krajina' and other Serb-held areas within the Croatian Republic. The battle for Slovenia was over only ten days after it has started, with international criticism heaped upon the JNA as it withdrew into Croatian territory. Slovenia found itself 'free to go' from the Yugoslav federation, not an entitlement it would share with Croatia.

Tudjman rightly viewed the Slovenian secession with grim portent. He had

rushed through a declaration of independence on the same day (July 25th 1991) though, unlike Slovenia, Croatia was ill prepared in terms of both earning international approval and establishing control over federal-level competences. This declaration only increased the intensity of the “undeclared and dirty war” (Silber and Little, 1995: 169) across Croatian territory. The now-Serbianized⁸ JNA lost any pretence of defending Yugoslav territorial integrity and, instead, intervened in Croatia in support of the autonomous Serbian regions. Tudjman, however, refused to declare war on the JNA on Croatian soil, deciding not to employ the same (effective) guerrilla strategies carried out by Slovenia against the JNA barracks. Tudjman took this decision in order to bolster international support, as he felt that he would lose the moral high ground if he actively declared war as opposed to being the subject of external Serbian aggression. Warren Zimmerman (1996), the last US ambassador to Yugoslavia, notes how Tudjman alluded to his certainty of international intervention in conversation in mid-1991:

I agreed with him [Tudjman] that the JNA was not acting in a neutral fashion but asked how he could possibly hope to take it on with his neophyte army. “Oh,” he said offhandedly, “your country will come to my rescue with military force.” I told him there wasn’t a speck of credibility in this assertion and urged him not to base any military calculations on an American bailout. I failed to puncture Tudjman’s serenity. “Perhaps I know more about your country than you do, Mr. Ambassador,” he said with a smile.

(Zimmerman, 1996: 154)

This faith in a decisive military intervention perhaps asked a little too much of the contradictory and disorganised international response to the growing Yugoslav crisis. The reunification of Germany and the growing political proximity

⁸ Croatia and Slovenia had halted conscription programmes to the JNA as long as eighteen months before declaring independence and following JNA action in Slovenia more non-Serbs deserted, joining instead their own territorial defence forces. Even prior to these events, the officer corps of the army always held a disproportionately high percentage of Serbs (Glenny, 1999). Later in Bosnia, the Prime Minister Alija Izetbegović claimed that a distinction could be made between the reservists (who, he claimed, were Serb opportunists) and the regular army (who were more professional and non-aligned) (Zimmerman, 1996: 191).

of member states had engendered a fresh optimism at the diplomatic capabilities of the European Community (EC), prompting the Luxembourg foreign minister Jacques Poos to declare that, in confronting the Yugoslavian issue, “the hour of Europe had dawned” (quoted in Silber and Little, 1995: 159). Over the following months, and then years, this statement gained a hollow tone as the member states of the EC stood divided on what action to take regarding the slow disintegration of Yugoslavia. The UK and France continued to counsel against recognition of an independent Croatia, citing a concern that it would inflame violence and lead to an escalation of the conflict. Instead, they preferred to pursue a negotiated settlement through the establishment of the International Conference on Yugoslavia under the chairmanship of former British Foreign Secretary and NATO Secretary General, Lord Carrington. These initial peace-building attempts drew on a rhetoric that would become familiar over the course of the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. Rather than assessing underlying political factors precipitating conflict, such as control over the resources of the Yugoslav state or the poor implementation of the 1974 Constitution, Lord Carrington resorted to lamenting the Balkan temperament and stressing the complexity of ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’. As Simms (2001) notes:

Carrington’s strategy hinged on a flawed presumption and a flawed tactic. From the outset he held all sides to be more or less equally responsible for the violence. They were, he subsequently claimed, ‘all impossible people...all as bad as each other, and there are just *more* Serbs’.

(Simms, 2001: 17, emphasis in the original)

This Balkanistic equivalency would characterise diplomatic intervention, particularly from the UK, over the coming years. Silber and Little (1995) lament how foreign diplomats “behaved as though the war had no underlying structural causes at all [...] They behaved as though all they had to do was to persuade the belligerents of the folly of war” (Silber and Little, 1995: 159). In September 1991, as if to reaffirm the notion that all sides were equally to blame and that ‘they would come to their senses’, an arms embargo was placed on the whole of the former

Yugoslavia. This action played into the hands of the heavily armed Serbianized JNA, while disadvantaging the Croatian and, soon after, Bosnian government forces. Seemingly as a statement of the futility of this embargo, in October 1991 the JNA began to bombard the Croatian town of Vukovar, in the east of the republic on the banks of the river Danube. Simultaneously, and representing even less of a military threat, heavy artillery around the medieval Adriatic port of Dubrovnik began to shell this UNESCO World Heritage Site. These actions drew a belated response from the UN who, through the mediation of former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, brokered a temporary settlement to allow the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force, UNPROFOR (UN Protection Force), to four regions of Croatia.

3.6 War in Bosnia

The gesture of UNPROFOR troops was too little, and too late, to have an impact on the future of Croatia's neighbour, Bosnia. Following heavy diplomatic pressure, in particular at the meeting of EC foreign ministers in December 13th-15th 1991, Germany succeeded in pushing through the international recognition of Croatian independence and, in doing so, established the Badinter Commission to assess the independence claims of any Yugoslav republic that wished to secede. This decision provoked alarm amongst the Serb communities in Croatia, spreading concern that an independent Bosnia would leave no land bridge between themselves and their protectors in Belgrade. The retreat of the JNA following the deployment of 10 000 UNPROFOR troops amplified these concerns. Consequently, attention (both regional and international) switched to the ethnically mixed Bosnia, where the political elite were struggling with the division of Yugoslavia. As Silber and Little (1995) suggest, the options were stark:

Bosnia, which had consistently cautioned against early recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, was now caught in the dilemma it most feared: its choice now was to join Slovenia and Croatia in seeking independence and, by so doing, risk provoking a civil war against its own Serbs, or to stay inside a rump Yugoslavia dominated by Serbia and, by so doing, suffer the same fate, ultimately as Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro which had been brought under the complete control of Belgrade.

(Silber and Little, 1995: 201)

Elections in the republic on July 30th 1991 had seen a narrow victory for the SDA (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije*), a Bosnijk orientated party headed by Alija Izetbegović, which stood for a multi-ethnic and united Bosnian state. Due to the demographic balance in the country, along with Izetbegović as president, the appointed speaker of parliament was a Serb and the Prime Minister was a Croat. It was an uneasy coalition, disposed more to creating political stagnation than seeking consensus on the future of the republic. The rise of nationalist political parties, such as the SDA, the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka* or SDS) of Radovan Karadžić, and the Croat HDZ under the patronage of Tudjman, began to polarise the Bosnian population. This anonymous passage from a collection of children's accounts of the conflict describes the confusion as the rigid ethno-religious categories emerged in the Bosnian classroom:

Vlado walked into the classroom, raised two fingers high in the air and said: 'HDZ!'

Djordje was quick to answer, but instead of two, he raised three fingers and cried: 'SDS!'

Vedad did not even raise a finger. He just said: 'SDA!'

The tone of the conversation was humorous. I thought I must have missed part of the joke, so just went along and laughed.

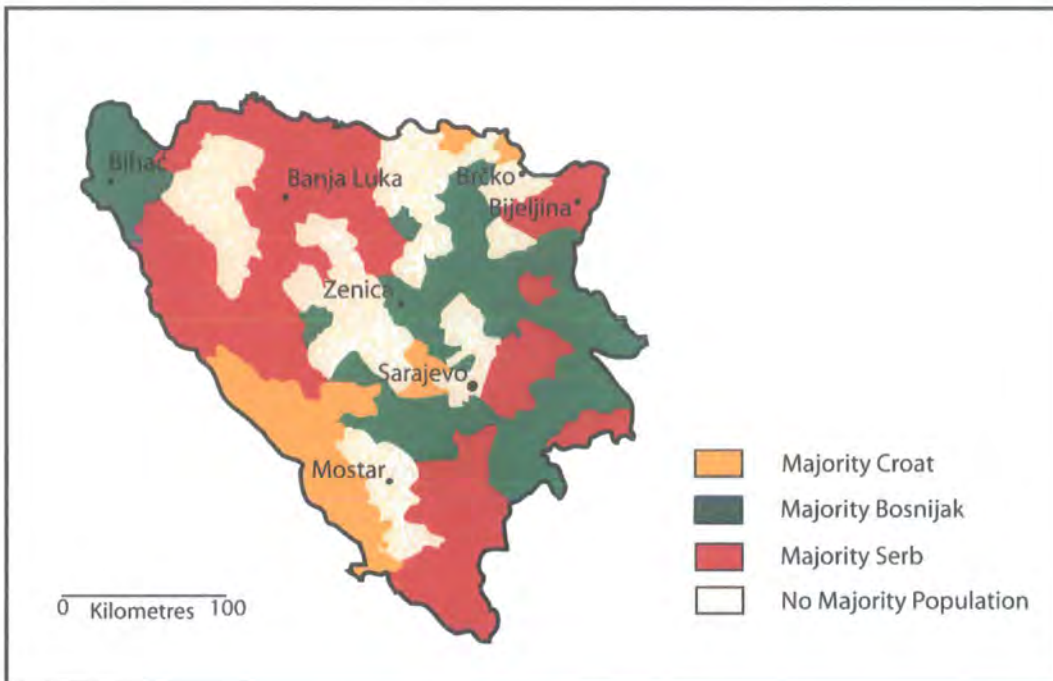
Later that evening, after I got home, I told my mum about it, hoping she would find it funny, laugh, and clarify the joke for me. I didn't want to tell her, or anyone else, that I didn't have a clue about what was going on. My mum did not laugh. She looked down and told me that she did not want to talk to me about such things.

(‘D.V’ in Lesić, 1995: 28-29)

During the fieldwork, a number of young respondents agreed with this passage, detailing their surprise at their ‘ethnic’ group and claimed to have no knowledge of this identity prior to the emergence of nationally orientated political parties. Serbian leaders, such as Radovan Karadžić, called for the division of Bosnia down ethnic lines, citing it as the only option for avoiding civil war. A glance at the intermingled distribution of different ethnicities in 1991 points to the absurdity (and cartographic impossibility) of this suggestion (see Map 3.3).

Over the course of 1991 Serb politicians began to ignore the protestations of Izetbegović and established their own ‘Serbian autonomous areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina’, a tactic they had learnt from the war in Croatia. On November 11th 1991, the Serbs held a plebiscite and voted unanimously to stay in the Yugoslav Federation. Later, in January 1992, they declared their territory the ‘Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina’ (later changed to the Republika Srpska) as a “defence against the Muslims” (Silber and Little, 1995: 218). The international community made a somewhat belated intervention to the rising tension in Bosnia in the form of the Lisbon Conference of March 18th 1992. This event, mediated by Portuguese EC mediator Jose Cutilero, proposed the cantonment of Bosnia into three nationally defined territorial units, while retaining the existing external borders of the republic. This plan is of significance as it marks the first occasion where the international community drew on the logic of cartographically defined ethno-

national areas in an attempt to prevent (or stop) conflict in Bosnia. All sides initially agreed to the Lisbon plan, though after returning to Sarajevo Izetbegović, perhaps aware of the implications of agreeing to national territorial areas, changed his mind (Silber and Little, 1995: 219). Ominously, the Serbs and the Croats continued bilateral talks concerning the division of Bosnia. For Karadžić, the key question was the 'northern corridor', the link area of land joining the Serbs in north-west Bosnia and the Krajina with those in eastern Bosnia and Serbia itself. This prospective 'land-bridge' skirted along the Sava River, encompassing Brčko at its narrowest point.



Map 3.3 The distribution of ethnic groups in the Bosnia 1991 census

(Source: Adapted from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/bosnia/ethnic_majorities_97.jpg
[accessed 19/09/04])

By this stage, Bosnia seemed to be on an irrevocable path to war. On the 29th February 1992 an independence referendum was held across Bosnia, in which the Bosnian Serbs played no part branding it "illegal" (Zimmerman, 1996: 188). Serb forces, including the JNA, erected barriers around Serb villages and demarcated

Serb areas in Sarajevo. One month later the European Community and the United States recognised Bosnia's independence, citing the majority vote at the referendum. This act played into the hands of Radovan Karadžić who claimed that then, as in the past, the outside powers were bent against Serbian sovereignty (Udovički and Stikovać, 2000: 179). These nationalist proclamations were taken as a call to arms as during April 1992 Serbian paramilitaries begun fighting for territory across Bosnia. These efforts were aided by the JNA, who had redeployed out of Slovenia and Croatia and had seen a vast swelling of their number in the Serb areas of Bosnia. In early April 1992, heavy artillery surrounded Sarajevo, positions they would hold until the signing of the Dayton Agreement three and a half years later.

It seems surprising considering the precedent of Slovenia and then Croatia that the international community found it so difficult to predict this emerging conflict in Bosnia. Government ministers in the UK continued to draw upon the rhetoric of regional complexity and 'ancient ethnic hatreds' to justify a policy of non-intervention. For UK Prime Minister John Major the whole conflict appeared to emerge out of thin air:

The conflict in Bosnia crept up on us while our attention was on the turmoil in the Soviet Union, and took us almost unawares [...] Its roots were bewildering

(Major, 1999: 532)

On countless other occasions during the Bosnian war, the UK government, and other members of the international community, would reproduce this strategy of casting confusion over this 'bewildering' conflict. What was avoided within these geopolitical scripts was any suggestion of the "banality" of the conflict and the possibility that it was driven not by a frenzy of mass ethnic-based nationalism but "largely by small groups of politically empowered thugs (substantially drawn from the ranks of bands of soccer hooligans, criminal gangs and released prisoners)" (Andreas, 2004: 32). Instead it seems that Balkanism (Todorova, 1997, as discussed above) had a pervasive effect on UK policy making. Non-intervention was justified through a portrayal of the events in Bosnia as a collective "moral sickness" (Owen,

1998: 1). One particular tactic was to draw a parallel between Northern Ireland (as opposed to the Falklands or Iraq) and Bosnia, in doing so evoking the long-term 'quagmire' of military intervention (Simms, 2001: 5). The US administrations of Bush (Senior) and Clinton, who were keen to draw parallels between Bosnia and Vietnam, echoed this policy (Ó Tuathail, 1996). At this crucial stage in the destruction of Yugoslavia, the foreign policy of the UK appeared to be dictated by a dispassionate realism, that the only way to stop the war was to control the supply of arms (through the embargo) and wait to see who wins. As one journalist at the time suggested:

Ministers don't say so in public, but the fundamental British view remains that only a strong Serbia can ultimately guarantee security in the Balkans.

(Sheridan, 1995 quoted in Simms, 2001: 12).

However, the strong Serb presence in Bosnia was guaranteeing everything but security. Brčko, with its location on the 'northern corridor', became a vital strategic target of the Serb forces. In April 1992, fighting broke out in the centre of town (the location of JNA barracks), while Serb forces simultaneously attacked from the nearby villages of Razljevo and Grčica. These troops met little resistance from Bosnijak or Croat forces. The battle for Brčko is thought to have lasted only two days, after which the frontline shifted to the southern outskirts of the town, where it stayed for the duration of the conflict. As with Bijeljina⁹ before it, the official Serb terminology for the attack was 'a liberation' and, to this day, a large concrete monument stands in the centre of town as a memorial to "the Serb liberation of Brčko". Following the invasion of Brčko, Serb paramilitaries rounded-up the Muslim population of the town (which constituted the majority of the 41 000 inhabitants). This was one town amongst many in Bosnia that at this time experienced *čišćenje terena* (the cleansing of the ground), more commonly known as 'ethnic cleansing'. Bosnijak women and children were either expelled

⁹ A town of similar size to Brčko, around 60 kilometres east, near the Serbian border.

immediately or exchanged for others in swaps organised by the UNHCR (the United Nations High Commission for Refugees). Men and boys, if unlucky enough to be kept in Brčko, were held at informal 'collection centres' where their fate was uncertain. Helsinki Watch (1992), the human rights observation group, report the account of a Bosnijak man who was taken to the White Mosque (the largest Mosque in Brčko):

Approximately 100 to 150 men, between the ages of 15 and 80, were already in the mosque. We were forced to sing Četnik songs. At night, we were ordered to squat in a single line and told that if we fell asleep we would never wake up. During the night, local Serbs from Brčko who dressed up in Četnik uniforms would come and beat us with their boots. Usually, three to four Četniks would come in every ten minutes; they were not always the same men. They beat people at random, including the old men. Each person was beaten for approximately ten minutes. The president of the town council and I were beaten together but they beat him more severely. They seemed intent on breaking his bones and knocked out most of his teeth. Seven or eight men were taken out of the mosque and never returned.

(Brčko resident in Helsinki Watch, 1992: 96)

The central concentration camp in Brčko was located at the port (*luka*) on the river Sava. Two men, Goran Jelisić and Ranko Cesić, have been indicted for genocide and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at the Hague for their part in the atrocities in the camp over 1992¹⁰. Over the course of the following six months the police station, the headquarters of bus company 'Laser' (which operates to this day) and the local Sports Hall were all locations of war crimes against Bosnijak men and boys (ICTY, 2003). In addition to the human atrocities, Serb forces engineered the removal of all physical symbols of Islam from the landscape, as the streets were renamed and all four mosques in the town razed. One interview respondent, a local Serb who was resident in Brčko at the time, described the day of the pre-meditated destruction of

¹⁰ The indictments relating to Brčko can be found at: www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/jel-2ai981019e.htm (Jelisić) and www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/ces-3ai021126e.htm (Cesić).

the White Mosque:

It was crazy. They advertised that they would blow up the Mosque on the local radio in the morning and said they would do it at such-and-such a time that evening. It was done so that residents near-by could open their windows so they were not smashed with the force of the blast [...] When it happened it totally destroyed the building, and the remains were taken away. You couldn't even see that it had been there.

(Interview with Goran Mihajlović, Brčko 4th May 2003)

Such extreme lengths meant that Brčko was 'cleansed' not only of its inhabitants but also its past. The streets were renamed, signs were changed to Cyrillic script and monuments were erected to Četnik heroes such as Draža Mihailović. The town itself survived the remainder of the war as a transit route for Serb forces between the Eastern and the Western halves of the Republika Srpska. At its narrowest, this 'land-bridge', crucial to uniting the Serbs, was only five kilometres wide and from vantage points the towers of Croatian churches to the north across the Sava and the minarets of mosques over the frontline to the south could be clearly seen (Glenny, 1996). This narrow stretch of land was, however, the Serbs "Achilles' heel" (Silber and Little, 1995: 283). This was not simply a reference to military weakness, for Serb retention of this 'ethnically cleansed' territory would be difficult to justify in any peace settlement.

By 1993 Serb forces had taken control of around seventy percent of the rest of Bosnia. Sarajevo remained under siege and the war in Southern Bosnia, primarily between Bosnijaks and Croats, had escalated as the town of Mostar experienced fierce fighting. International diplomacy showed little sign of a breakthrough, with the first major peace effort, the cantonal arrangement of the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (VOPP), finally rejected by Karadžić's Bosnian Serbs. The most 'Western' governments seemed able to do was brand the conflict a 'humanitarian crisis' and deliver aid and food accordingly. Such a stance appeared to classify the war as a natural disaster, although this is entirely consistent with a reading of the conflict as a

'moral sickness'. David Rieff (2002) connects this strategy with a reluctance to become militarily involved with the conflict:

Deploying and being willing to sacrifice soldiers was never intended to be a principal form of the West's response [to the Bosnian conflict]. Humanitarianism was. The idea was simple, coarse and brutal, and it would prove astonishingly effective. Instead of political action backed by credible threat of military force, the Western powers would substitute a massive humanitarian effort to alleviate the worst consequences of a conflict that they wanted to contain.

(Rieff, 2002: 131)

Following their successful peacekeeping mission in Croatia, UNPROFOR were deployed across Bosnia. However, with an inadequate and poorly defined mandate and limited in number, their presence had little impact on the conflict. One soldier I interviewed in Brčko was assigned to UNPROFOR in the central Bosnian town of Jajce for one six-month rotation. He described each patrol as a "mobile garage sale" due to the tendency for make-shift roadblocks to stage ambushes where equipment and arms were stolen, safe in the knowledge that UNPROFOR did not have the mandate to open fire unless they were fired upon first¹¹. UNPROFOR was given the task of protecting the three UN 'safe areas' at Žepa, Goražde and Srebrenica, established as an attempt to stem the exodus of refugees leaving Bosnia, primarily for Germany, Austria and Italy. The impotence of this force in the face of war atrocities was starkly underlined by the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995, where UN troops were unable to stop the murder of as many as 8 000 Bosnian men and boys. The activities of the UN in Srebrenica have since come in for considerable criticism, not least from the UN itself, recognising that 'impartiality' is not morally justifiable in situations of war crimes and genocide (see Annan, 1999: 6).

The events of Srebrenica, coupled with increased civilian loss of life in Sarajevo, increased the international political pressure to resolve the conflict. It

¹¹ Interview with S-For Civil Affairs Officer, Brčko 22nd May 2003.

seems that at this time, in late 1995, the foreign policy script of the international community shifted from the 'quagmire' (as discussed above) to the post-Second World War notion that "never again would observers stand by and witness genocide on the European continent" (Ó Tuathail, 1996a). The US Clinton administration had increasingly advocated a policy of 'lift and strike', where the arms embargo would be selectively lifted (specifically so the Bosniak government forces could defend themselves) coupled with air strikes on Serb heavy artillery positions. European governments had resisted this policy for some time, stating that it would put their troops at risk. This was not a problem that American faced: following the shooting down of the Black Hawk helicopters in Somalia in 1993 and associated loss of military life, it had not contributed any troops. However, in autumn 1995, three and a half years after the start of the Bosnia conflict, NATO intervened militarily to strike the Serb positions around Sarajevo. At much the same time Croatian forces, with the tacit approval of NATO, began 'Operation Storm' in the Krajina, with the direct intention of expelling all the Serbs. Some made the journey to Belgrade, whilst others simply crossed the border, welcomed into freshly vacated housing in Bosnia's Republika Srpska. Over this period, support from Belgrade for the Bosnian Serbs began to diminish, as did the enthusiasm of the army, where four years of fighting began to take its toll in greater rates of desertion and poor levels of conscription. The Croat and Bosnian forces, in a shaky alliance since 1994, began to counter attack, taking back large tracts of land, particularly in the north west of Bosnia, near the town of Bihać.

The combination of air strikes and the improving fortunes of the Bosniak-Croat forces increased the pace of international diplomacy, in part due to the fact that the Serbs, with declining fortunes on the battlefield, were keen to come to the table. The rejection of the VOPP had marked the end of a solution based upon (nationally orientated) cantons. Instead, the focus shifted to finding a resolution involving a partition of Bosnia, between the newly allied Muslim-Croat federation and the Serbs. Such an agreement would be easier to settle than the VOPP, mirroring as it did the battlefield realities across Bosnia in late 1995. The fall of the UN 'Safe Areas' removed a significant obstacle to the creation of a Serb territory in

Bosnia, as the pockets of Bosniyak displaced persons were evicted or killed. Fully subscribing to the tyranny of nationalist cartography Richard Holbrooke, the former US Ambassador and chief peace negotiator, encouraged the Croatian President Tudjman to 'recapture' the Bosnian towns of Sanski Most, Prijedor and Bosnaski Novi as they had become "worldwide symbols of ethnic cleansing" and suited the territorial distribution of his fledgling peace plan (Holbrooke, 1999: 160). This astonishing intervention is perhaps a little easier to understand in the context of what became the Dayton General Framework Agreement for Peace¹², signed in November 1995 on a remote air base in Dayton, Ohio.

There was much made of the success of the Dayton Agreement, it ended the war and created a 'multi-ethnic' Bosnian state, leading Holbrooke (1999) to suggest that it was a "good agreement on paper" (Holbrooke, 1999: 335). However, despite the rhetoric of the creation of a 'multi-ethnic state' the agreement conceded to nationalist cartography: the creation of ethnically defined territories dividing the Bosnian state. In effect, the borders legitimised at Dayton were the solidification of the front lines of the conflict itself. Campbell (1999) describes Dayton as an act of 'apartheid cartography' (a cartography that had its roots in the Lisbon conference in 1992), through the creation of two sub-state 'Entities': the Muslim-Croat Federation¹³ and the Republika Srpska (RS) (see Map 3.4).

¹² The Dayton General Framework Agreement for Peace will be referred to as the 'Dayton Agreement' for the remainder of the thesis.

¹³ The Muslim-Croat Federation will be referred to as 'the Federation' for the remainder of the thesis.



Map 3.4 The division of Bosnia at the Dayton Agreement

(Source: Adapted from Bose, 2002: 2)

The enduring ‘success’ of the Dayton Agreement seems to have been the opportunity for each faction to claim a varying degree of victory: for the Serbs producing the near-sovereignty of the RS, for the Bosnians retaining the Bosnian state, for the international diplomats marking the end of military action in a politically damaging conflict. The Federation comprised 51 percent of Bosnia’s territory, the RS the remaining 49 percent, in recognition of the greater population in the Federation. As Kumar (1997) suggests, the Dayton Agreement seemed more like “the partition of Bosnia with a get out clause for outside powers” (Kumar, 1997: 22). The agreement called for the deployment of 60 000 peacekeeping troops, or as they were known an ‘implementation force’ (I-For), and the establishment of the OHR, an unprecedented international governing body, which held executive and legislative

powers over Bosnian territory. However, the institutional presence of the international community did not end with the OHR as Holbrooke (1999) suggests:

Unfortunately, we had created a structure for implementing Dayton in which responsibility and authority would rest with no single individual or institution. Although Bosnia would play host to fewer agencies than it had during the UN days, too many still remained in the process, including NATO, the UN and UNHCR, the OSCE, the EU, the World Bank and the IMF - and ...the Office of the High Representative, headed by Carl Bildt.

(Holbrooke, 1999: 319)

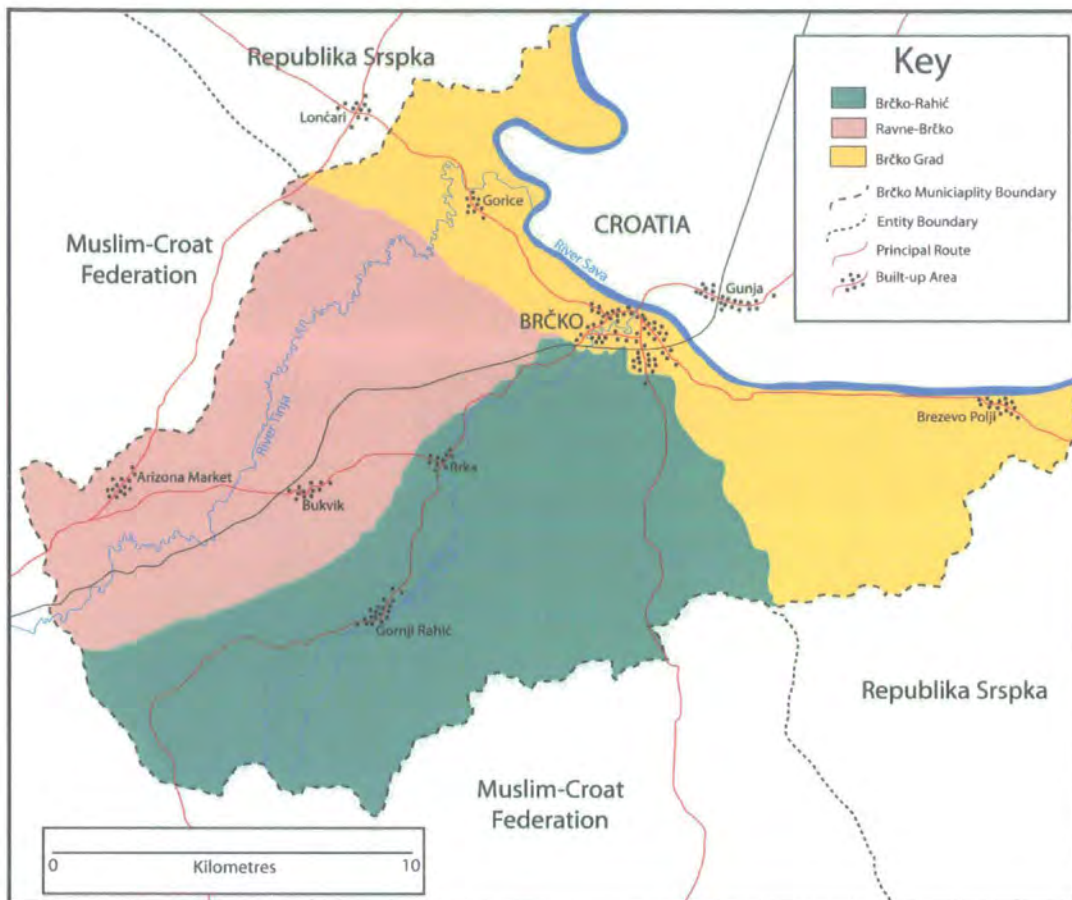
The peace negotiations themselves had been a painstaking process of assigning contested towns and territory to either the Federation or the RS. Accordingly, the RS was 'awarded' Srebrenica, while the Federation retained control of a larger part of Sarajevo. Such contentious territorial assignments could be defended with reference to Dayton's 'right to return' of refugees and displaced persons. Negotiating the settlement of Brčko at the Dayton Peace Accords proved particularly contentious. Richard Holbrooke saw the resolution of Brčko as the "toughest of all issues at Dayton" (Holbrooke, 1999: 296). Similarly, according to Carl Bildt, the EU Special Envoy for Bosnia, Brčko posed "the mother of all difficulties in the Bosnian peace process" (Bildt, 1997). Bosniak and Bosnian Croat delegates argued that giving the area to the Serbs would reward ethnic cleansing while also denying access for the Federation to the Sava River. Serb negotiators countered that the RS would not be viable in two parts, sensing that this would leave the western part subject to the same fate as those Serbs in the neighbouring Krajina region of Croatia. Without the Brčko link, the viability of the Republika Srpska would be in jeopardy (International Crisis Group, 2003: 2). This impasse almost proved too much for the Dayton negotiators, with all sides laying claim to Brčko and its surrounding municipality. However, Slobodan Milošević broke this deadlock by agreeing to put Brčko under international arbitration with a decision reached within one year (Silber and Little, 1995: 376). As such, Annex 2 of the Dayton Agreement

(article 5) states that:

The parties agree to binding arbitration of the disputed portion of the Inter-Entity Boundary Line in the Brčko area on the map attached in the Appendix [...] No later than six months after the entry into force of this agreement, the Federation shall appoint one arbitrator, and the Republika Srpska shall appoint one arbitrator. A third arbitrator shall be selected by agreement of the Parties' appointees within thirty days thereafter...The third arbitrator shall serve as presiding officer of the arbitral tribunal.

(Dayton Agreement, Annex 2, article 5 in OHR, 2000: 37)

As no map was actually attached, the first decision for the prospective arbitration panel was to define the borders of the area under dispute. Following the selection of former legal advisor to the US State Department Roberts Owen as presiding arbitrator, with Professor Čazim Sadiković (representing the Federation) and Dr. Vitomir Popović (representing the RS), the former pre-war Brčko Municipality was identified as the area under the panel's authority (see Map 3.5 overleaf). As the map shows, the Brčko Municipality had divided into three 'mini-municipalities' during the conflict, each with an ethnic orientation: Brčko Grad (Serb), Ravne-Brčko (Croat) and Brčko-Rahić (Bosnijak). The task of the arbitration process was to establish a coherent strategy for the future governance of this fractured municipality, with any structure for the organization of a future authority at the disposal of the panel. It is the outcome of this process, and its consequence for the development of civil society, which is examined in detail in the next chapter.



Map 3.5 The area under International Arbitration – the former Brčko Municipality¹⁴

(Source: Adapted from www.posavina.de/prostor/karta/ravne.gif and Kemenčić and Schofield, 1998)

3.7 Conclusion

Since the conflict in Bosnia there have been numerous attempts to ‘uncover the truth’, to establish a unifying narrative that can explain the violence that marked the fall of Yugoslavia. Many such attempts invoke a founding teleology, a moment where an inevitable decline to conflict began, often identified as the events of the

¹⁴ This map depicts only the approximate territories governed by the war time sub-municipalities of Brčko Grad, Ravne-Brčko and Brčko-Rahić from 1992 to their dissolution in 1999 (discussed in Chapter 4). The boundaries between these administrative entities were contested over this period and could be characterised as ‘zones’ rather than a fixed and universally agreed lines.

Second World War or the death of Tito. From the outset a reductive project of this nature is flawed in its denial of heterogeneity and the existence of many competing 'Bosnias'. This chapter has not attempted to establish the facts behind the conflict, but rather to explain the historical events that have since been deployed in order to produce Bosnia as an object of enquiry, a site of violence or as a locus for intervention. This is an attempt to portray the complexity of the Bosnian war, as opposed to isolating key factors and reducing them to consumable causes. This strategy should not be confused with a critique of the possibility of knowledge or a position of detached indifference. Rather, an acknowledgment of heterogeneity, the every-day, the contradictory and the banal provides the researcher with a powerful set of tools to examine the essentialised and reductive interpretations of post-conflict Bosnia.

The casting of the Balkans as a site of 'ancient ethnic hatreds' on the 'hinterland' of Europe served as a strategy to encourage non-intervention by European and American governments during the conflict in Bosnia. The Dayton agreement did not mark a significant departure from this logic, focussing as it did on the demarcation of ethno-national territories within a weak decentralised Bosnian state. The cartographic trick of omnipotence has fixed the Bosnian conflict onto territory, and has simultaneously acted to justify essentialised images of Bosnia as a divided community. The clean lines of the Dayton Agreement's maps had one uncomfortable area of cross-hatching at Brčko, a territory too difficult to fix and left open to negotiation through a process of international arbitration. The following chapter documents the course of these negotiations. It examines how the Brčko 'question' was resolved through a departure from the logic of Dayton and an attempt to produce a multi-ethnic alternative within Bosnian territory. By utilising the qualitative ethnographic methodology discussed in the previous chapter, these negotiations and solutions are examined in the everyday context of Brčko life as the gaze of international agencies has shaped it.

Chapter 4

Improvising the State:

The consecration of Brčko District

4.1 Introduction

Space is a social product [...] it is not simply "there", a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control and hence of domination, of power.

(Lefebvre, 1991: 24)

The central problem we faced in Brčko was simply creating it, the laws, the institutions [...] [and] making people think in terms of Brčko District.

(Former OHR Official, Brčko 20th February 2003)

This chapter will examine how the 'problem' of Brčko was resolved following the Dayton Agreement. As the comments above suggest, this process

involved increased international intervention to produce a new territory within the Bosnian state termed 'Brčko District'. Drawing on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1989), this chapter examines how the process of creating Brčko has led to the OHR accumulating symbolic capital and, consequently, gaining the power to legitimise particular activities, institutions and discourses. In drawing upon such an economic metaphor I argue that the state, left weak and decentralised following the Dayton Agreement, is 'improvised' in post-conflict Brčko by both international and local agencies, though ultimately legitimised by the OHR. This improvisation has guided the political, economic and symbolic landscapes of Brčko as particular discourses of democracy and multi-ethnicity have been reproduced in the post-conflict period. It is the effect of these discourses on the practices and production of civil society that is explored in greater detail in later chapters.

First it is necessary to examine the historical events that led to the creation of Brčko District, in particular the negotiations of the international arbitration tribunal. For the town and surrounding countryside this was a period of stagnation: the population transfers violently enacted in the conflict remained unchanged during the peace. In addition, international donors (and investors) were wary of allocating money to an area with an uncertain future. Unlike the Dayton negotiation process, which had comprised a short period of intensive talks carried out on a secluded American airbase, the attempt to resolve the fate of Brčko was drawn out over a series of international conferences and declarations over the late 1990s. This protracted process meant that the conclusions of the arbitral tribunal could be shaped and influenced by events in Brčko. The panel paid particular attention to the success of the returns process (referring to the return of refugees and displaced persons to their pre-war homes) and the holding of state and district elections. After a series of delays, the arbitration process was finally brought to a close with the publication in March 1999 of the 'Final Award'. This document decreed that the pre-war Brčko Municipality (see Map 3.5) would become a special multi-ethnic district of Bosnia. This decision, unique within post-Dayton Bosnia, was predicated on the intensification of international intervention in the District, through the strengthening of OHR control, the continued presence of S-For (Stabilisation Force) NATO troops

at a nearby base and the belated arrival of a series of multi-lateral donor organisations. The remaining sections of the chapter examine the implications of these processes on the political, economic and symbolic landscapes of Brčko District.

4.2 The Arbitration Process

Beyond a cessation of military conflict, little changed in Bosnia following the signing of the Dayton Agreement. Implementation of the agreement over 1996 and 1997 proved slow and chaotic, as poorly organised international agencies met with strong resistance from nationalist political parties. The division of Bosnia into two 'Entities' (the RS and the Federation) had empowered nationalist political parties: territories within the Bosnian state were 'linked' to particular national identities. This division acted as a significant barrier to the return of refugees, while also providing a disincentive on the part of the RS to take an active part in the central Bosnian state institutions. These obstructions again demonstrate the duality at the core of Dayton: nationalist political parties (in particular the Serbs) had agreed to sign on account of the creation of the Entities, while international observers and pro-Bosniyak groups had been reassured by the promise of a multi-ethnic state and refugee return. While this paradox may have seemed less important during the tense negotiations to bring military violence to an end, it became an intractable political reality.

The political will to break this stalemate and re-think the implementation of Dayton had not existed in 1995 and 1996. NATO countries¹ had committed the required number of I-For troops (60 000), though this did not include providing the necessary political mandate. In light of the events in Somalia in October 1993, where 18 American soldiers had been killed and 84 injured when two 'Black Hawk' helicopters were shot down, there was concern amongst the Clinton Administration as to the domestic political damage of troop casualties in Bosnia. Perhaps the reticence towards sending troops into Bosnia should not be seen as a surprise

¹ I-For was predominantly provided at the outset by the US, the UK and France.

following a conflict where the US and UK media had largely subscribed to Balkanistic discourses of primordial hatreds held by barbaric peoples. The outcome was a restricted mandate that was weak and purely defensive. During 1996, I-For did not attempt to arrest indicted war criminals or actively reduce criminal or violent activity, as their mandate stressed their monitoring role as opposed to direct intervention. The central focus of Annex 1a of the Dayton agreement, which outlines the military aspects of the peace agreement, was the cessation of *military* hostilities, and therefore the remit of I-For involved ensuring that the armies of the Entities kept the ceasefire (see Dayton agreement, 1995: Annex 1a in particular article II). The unrest that they faced following the signing of Dayton was almost universally civilian in nature, fuelled by ultra-nationalist media and wartime political leaders.

Over the period of arbitration, Brčko experienced nationalist political intransigence and civilian unrest. The division of the District by the IEHL (the inter-entity boundary line) meant that the *de facto* partition of the pre-war municipality continued in the immediate post-war period, with the northern urban section of the district (Brčko Grad) controlled by the RS, while the other two 'mini-municipalities' (Ravne-Brčko and Brčko-Rahić) were part of the Federation. The fact that Brčko Municipality was subject to international arbitration had little impact on its division on the ground. Radovan Karadžić's SDS remained in firm control of the government, media, police and judiciary within Brčko town, while the Croat HDZ controlled Ravne-Brčko and the SDA Brčko-Rahić. The arbitration negotiations, however, were not taking place in a vacuum. The conclusions of the tribunal were directly influenced by the extent of the implementation of the Dayton Agreement in Brčko and to this end, the negotiations seemed to focus on two main indicators: the return of refugees and the holding of democratic elections.

4.2.1 The Returns of Refugees

One of the central tenets of the Dayton Agreement was the right for displaced persons (DPs) to return to their homes:

All refugees and displaced persons have the right freely to return to their homes of origin. They shall have the right to have restored to them property of which they were deprived in the course of hostilities since 1991 and to be compensated for any property that cannot be restored to them.

(Dayton agreement, Annex 7 article I in OHR, 2000a: 51)

This was an ambitious principle in a country where approximately 50 percent of the pre-war population of 4.3 million was displaced during the 43 months of war. Over 1 million of the displaced persons remained in the country while over 1.2 million were dispersed throughout 25 host nations (UNHCR, 1997a: 30). A UNHCR survey found that by early 1996 Germany hosted the largest number of refugees from Bosnia (345 000), followed by Croatia (288 000), the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (253 000), Austria (80 000), Sweden (61 500), Switzerland (26 000) and Norway (12 000) (UNHCR, 1997a: 5). In light of these figures, the international motivation for establishing a successful returns process is clear. Of these refugees, Bosniaks constituted the largest number (610 000), followed Bosnian Croats (307 000), Bosnian Serbs (253 000) and others (23 000) (UNHCR, 1997a: 7). In Brčko Municipality alone it was estimated by the UNHCR that by the end of the war there were 35 073 displaced persons in parts within the Muslim Croat Federation (Ravne-Brčko and Brčko-Rahić) and 17 261 in the RS part (UNHCR, 1997b).

Despite these statistics, the political conditions in Brčko Municipality (as in other areas of Bosnia) acted as a significant barrier to the (almost non-existent) returns process in 1996, and in particular to Bosniak and Croat families returning to their pre-war homes in Brčko town. Indeed, over this initial post-war period the displacement of the population continued in Brčko, as RS authorities drew on the

vacant housing stock to house displaced Serbs from Sarajevo, Glamoč, Jajce, Sanski Most and Bihać. This situation was echoed across Bosnia: ‘non-military ethnic cleansing’ occurred in concert with continuing dominance of the wartime nationalist parties intent on creating homogenous ‘ethnic’ spaces (Campbell, 1998a: 230). One particular area of concern in Brčko was the Zone of Separation (ZOS), the mined and destroyed territory between the former front-lines that, following Dayton, became known as the IEBL (the Inter-entity Boundary Line, see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The ZOS covered a significant area of the Brčko suburbs, including neighbourhoods such as Omebegovaća, Dizdaruša, Gajevi and Brod that had previously accommodated significant Bosnijak and Croat majority populations. There was concern among the RS authorities in Brčko that the demographic alterations brought about by the returns to the ZOS could weaken their claim to Brčko within the arbitration process. As a former OHR Official explained during the fieldwork, the RS authorities were reluctant to “alter the facts on the ground”². This concern provoked a two-way reconstruction effort over summer 1996, with both Federation and RS authorities attempting to fill the vacant housing in the Brčko ZOS with members of ‘their’ ethnic group. The RS authorities had further leverage over returnees to the RS side of the ZOS as these individuals were subject to the laws of the entity (as specified in Annex 7), one of which was the requirement to hold a valid RS identity card. Returnees were understandably reluctant to hold an ID card with the Serb insignia of the twin-headed eagle, a symbol that many connected with fascism and the violent removal from their homes. In addition, Serb authorities often refused to issue new identity cards, thus justifying enforced removal of recent returnees on the grounds that they were not complying with entity law (with the full force of the Dayton Agreement behind them).

² Interview with former OHR Official, 20th February 2003.



Figure 4.1 Klanac, former ZOS, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 4.2 The 'Izbor' shoe factory, Klanac, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

As the returns process threatened the fragile peace within the Brčko area, I-For, themselves located in the new 'Camp McGovern' army base on a large tract of former agricultural land in the ZOS, declared a two-week moratorium on construction in the ZOS over July 1996. In this period, the OHR (in conjunction with the UNHCR, IPTF³ and I-For) established the International Housing Commission (IHC) to screen return applications to insure the rights of the claimants to the properties. However, the IHC was to prove an abject failure in this attempt. While there was a clear need to oversee the return of families to their pre-war homes, the complex bureaucracy of IHC coupled with the explicit lack of a guarantee of security to returning families (see above for a discussion of the limited mandate of I-For) undermined the international efforts. Consequently, incidents of damage to property or individuals were common over this period of the IHC, as documented by the International Crisis Group (ICG):

On the 11th November 1996, 9 reconstructed houses were dynamited in Brod and Omerbegovača. Between the 28th of February and 11th March 1997, 11 newly pre-fabricated houses were destroyed in Gajevi. In all, 200 houses owned by displaced Bosniaks were either blown up or burnt down before the IHC programme was halted.

(International Crisis Group, 1997: 2)

This example highlights the fragile security situation in Brčko over 1996. The 'right to return', as enshrined in Annex 7 of the Dayton agreement, was being denied to Bosniak and Croat returnees to Brčko as I-For had no mandate to intervene to ensure the returnees safety. The arbitration tribunal took particular interest in these events: the activities of RS officials were deemed to be blocking the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. The focus of the tribunal on these events led Gojko Kliković, then Prime Minister of RS, to pull out of the arbitration proceedings in December 1996 (ICG, 1998: 3). However, when the formal arbitration hearing began in Rome in January 1997 the RS changed its mind, perhaps

³ The UN-led International Police Task Force.

concerned that the entire Brčko Municipality would be handed over to the Federation. The outcome of the Rome negotiations, issued on February 14th 1997, was an interim decision, with a final resolution deferred for another year. The lack of a binding decision was an acknowledgement of the failings in Brčko over 1996:

Given the ongoing failures to comply with the Dayton Accords in the RS area of the Brčko Opština (particularly in terms of freedom of movement and the return of former residents to their Brčko homes), and the high level of tension resulting therefrom, there is a clear need to establish a program for the implementation of the Dayton Accords in the area [...].

(Arbitral Tribunal, Article I in OHR, 2001)

The strategy selected for ensuring Dayton implementation in the future was a radical scaling-up of international intervention in Brčko. The cornerstone of this approach was the formation of a new OHR office in Brčko (OHR-North), headed by a Deputy High Representative for Brčko, otherwise known as the 'Brčko Supervisor'⁴. In order to break the stagnancy that surrounded the political, economic and legal realms in Brčko, this post was granted a wide-ranging set of powers. These were set out in vague terms within the Rome interim declaration, partly on the basis that the remit of the post was to be decided by the Supervisor:

The Supervisor will have authority to promulgate binding regulations and orders in aid of the implementation program and local democratization. Such regulations and orders shall prevail against any conflicting law. All relevant authorities, including courts and police personnel, shall obey and enforce all Supervisory regulations and orders. The parties shall take all actions required to cooperate fully with the Supervisor in the implementation of this provision.

(Arbitral Tribunal, Article II in OHR, 2001)

⁴ Referred to as simply 'the Supervisor' for the remainder of the thesis.

In March 1997, in a supplementary award published at a Peace Implementation Council Meeting (PIC) in Vienna, High Representative Carl Bildt appointed US diplomat Robert Farrand as Supervisor of Brčko for one year, with deputies from Russia and the UK. The first significant declaration produced by Ambassador Farrand was, perhaps unsurprisingly, a 'Procedure for Return to Brčko', a document that established a new Returns Commission charged with implementing Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement. This body was composed of representatives from OHR, UNHCR, SFOR, IPTF and the Mayors of Brčko, though decisions required a quorum of only four. This new commission had a positive impact on the rate of returns, in particular speeding up the processing of claims and, more importantly, introducing a new Brčko ID card without Serb symbols on the front cover. By January 1998, the Returns Commission had approved the return 2461 families, most of whom were Bosniak (ICG, 1998: 8). Of those, 710 had actually 'returned', the criterion of which was spending at least one night at the property. In this narrow definition, the 'return' in the returns process appears to relate to property as opposed to actual demographic shift, thus the actual numbers of people settling back in Brčko were (and are) difficult to quantify.

During 1997, as the fledgling returns procedure appeared to be increasing, a series of symbolic barriers to returning Bosniak and Croat families appeared within the Brčko townscape. As has been noted previously, during the conflict the street names had been changed to reflect the Serbian domination of the town. The main shopping street was renamed 'The Serb liberation of Brčko', while the central traffic route was called *Bulevar Draža Mihailović* after the World War II Četnik leader. In place of the four mosques destroyed during the conflict (see Chapter 3), the Serb-led Brčko authorities began the constructing new Orthodox churches in the suburbs of Grčica and Meraje. In the case of Meraje, the OHR had designated the neighbourhood for Bosniak returns, with the new church taking prime position in the centre of a former residential area (see Figure 4.3 overleaf). Despite reassurances from the Mayor and Orthodox priest, intervention from the Supervisor designed to suspend building work at Meraje was fruitless (ICG, 1998: 9). On September 8th 1997, a concrete statue of Draža Mihailović was unveiled in the centre

of Brčko (fittingly on ‘his’ boulevard), though he had no connection with the town during his lifetime. Two weeks later, a fifteen-foot memorial dedicated to the ‘Serb Liberators of Brčko’ was unveiled nearby (see Figure 4.16 and Figure 4.17). These strategies were clear attempts to ‘Serbianise’ Brčko and use any means necessary to forge an historical link between the Serbian people and the townscape (a fallacy that had been deployed during the peace negotiations⁵). In comparison to violent intimidation or the imagery of the RS ID cards, the OHR initially found these intangible symbolic aspects of the Brčko landscape difficult to legislate against. As with earlier infringements, these factors were taken into consideration by the arbitral tribunal.



Figure 4.3 New Orthodox Church, Meraje, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

⁵ During a meeting of Croat and Serb forces in 1994, Croat forces asked for control of Brčko. Radovan Karadžić erroneously reported that “the Serbs refused because they built it and it was completely Serb”. (Silber and Little, 1995: 308).

4.2.2 Presidential and Municipal Elections

Another area that concerned both the tribunal and the new Supervisor were elections. Similar to the returns process, the Dayton Agreement contained an annex outlining the timing and conditions for democratic elections. It stated:

Elections shall take place on a date six months after entry into force of this Agreement or, if the OSCE determines a delay necessary, no later than nine months after entry into force.

(Dayton agreement, Annex 3 article III in OHR, 2000a: 39)

Considering the political, economic and social conditions in Bosnia, this was an extremely ambitious timetable. A number of commentators have suggested the reason for this compressed electoral timetable was that they would coincide with the US presidential election and allow the Clinton administration to claim a foreign policy triumph (Rieff, 1995; Griffiths, 1998; Donais, 2000). This appears a plausible argument. The downing of the Black Hawk helicopters in Mogadishu in 1993, with subsequent television footage of dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets, had influenced public opinion against sending troops to Bosnia. In his account of the Dayton implementation, chief negotiator Richard Holbrooke documents the difficulties he faced convincing the Clinton administration to commit large numbers of troops (Holbrooke, 1999). In light of this risk, there was a clear need to see rapid results in Bosnia, and the possibility of the all important 'exit strategy' was provided by the nationwide elections in September 1996. Williams (1996) suggested that the US desire for the September 1996 Bosnian vote was so great that "if the earth needs to be declared flat in the process, so be it" (Williams, 1996: 15).

The early elections suited the nationalist political parties and there is evidence that all three (SDS, SDA and HDZ) mutually reinforced and supported each other's electoral positions within their respective areas (Donais, 2000: 239).

Under the electoral system designed by the OSCE, the nationalist parties only had to secure the majority vote from their own ethnic group in areas under their control to stay in power. As Griffiths (1998) notes, the control of nationalist parties over the key domestic institutions and agencies such as police and media “ensured that they determined the agenda and discourse of the election campaign in 1996” (Griffiths, 1998: 61). In the RS, the reporting by official Serb media was deemed so offensive and biased to the ruling SDS party that High Representative Carl Bildt accused them of broadcasting propaganda that “even Stalin would be ashamed of” (ICG, 1996: 15 in Donais, 2000: 240). Such incidents led Human Rights Watch to declare in a pre-election report that:

Elections that are conducted under current conditions – where persons indicted for war crimes monopolise the media, using it for their own nationalistic goals; and those who would voice an alternative, multi-ethnic view of Bosnia and Herzegovina are silenced – will only consolidate the power of the extremists.

(Human Rights Watch, 1996: 2)

In addition to the dominance of the wartime nationalist parties, the dispersed population meant voter registration was a central problem facing the OSCE. This was perhaps exacerbated by granting voters the option of either voting where they resided in 1991, where they resided after ethnic cleansing in mid-1996 or, perhaps most confusingly, where they intended to reside in the future (Campbell, 1998a: 222). This ambiguous principle was an invitation for electoral fraud, as electoral registers within the RS were manipulated (through the media and incentives of humanitarian aid) to include the maximum number of Serbs. Indeed, radio broadcasts in the RS suggested that those who planned to vote in their pre-war places of residence were “directly attacking the Serbian nation” (Campbell, 1998a: 222). This strategy was also employed within Serbia itself, where some 31 000 were ‘assigned’ to vote in Brčko, while an additional 20 000 were registered in the formerly Bosniyak-majority town of Srebrenica (Donais, 2000: 241). Within this

context, it was not surprising that the elections simply ratified the continued rule of the wartime nationalist parties.

The OSCE decreed that the elections were 'free and fair' despite significant evidence of serious electoral fraud and an impossible turnout of 103.9 percent, (Griffiths, 1998: 61). This declaration prompted accusations that the OSCE were under pressure from the US Government to herald successful elections in Bosnia (Donais, 2000; Chandler, 2000). However, the elections did not succeed in giving the international agencies in Bosnia their 'exit strategy', as noted by Susan Woodward (1997):

Far from producing a smooth transition and an easy exit for I-For, the election predictably gave the democratic stamp of approval to the three nationalist parties that had waged the war.

(Woodward, 1997: 97)

The Dayton objective of a united and multi-ethnic Bosnia looked further away than ever after the 1996 Bosnian presidential elections. However, the elections did provide the OSCE with some lessons for the 1997 municipal elections in terms of voter registration and attempting to stem nationalist tirades in the media. The OSCE had previously scheduled the municipal vote for the same date as the presidential election, though the organisational demands and possibilities of electoral fraud forced a one-year delay. The OSCE made structural changes to the procedure of voter registration in an attempt to construct an accurate list of eligible voters. The process through which displaced persons could vote in their pre-war municipality was simplified, while the bureaucratic requirements for voting in a 'future municipality'⁶ were tightened.

In Brčko, the Supervisor perceived that the District elections could act as a vehicle for establishing a multi-ethnic governing body in Brčko Grad, following five years of dominance by the SDS. With this objective in mind, and with the backing

⁶ A 'future municipality' is defined by the OSCE as one in which the voter had not lived before the war.

of the OSCE, the Brčko elections were held only in the RS side of the District (Brčko town), while those Displaced Persons (DPs) from the town based in the Federation part of the District were given the opportunity to vote. This approach met with considerable opposition, as it suggested (most importantly to the arbitral tribunal) that Brčko could be treated in a similar fashion to other split municipalities across Bosnia. Thus, though Brčko was the only municipality in Bosnia in which the IEHL was subject to international arbitration, it was cut in two by the very organisations committed to multi-ethnic power structures and democratization (Griffiths, 1998: 64). There was also evidence of the 'carrot-and-stick' of arbitration as Robert Frowick, head of the OSCE mission in Bosnia, warned that taking part in the elections was compulsory:

[...] any attempt by either party to boycott the elections would undoubtedly be viewed by the Arbitrator as an extremely serious obstruction of efforts toward a democratic solution in Brčko, and could prejudice the case of whichever side took such action.

(Frowick in OHR, 1997a)

Despite such threats, and the extra measures employed by the OSCE, preparations for the municipal elections in Brčko were as chaotic as they had been for the presidential elections a year earlier. The decision to limit the election to the RS part of the pre-war municipality provoked consternation among the Federation political parties (SDA and SDP), and initially they refused to register for the vote. Following a meeting at OHR-North between the three mayors of Brčko District, coupled with pressure from the Supervisor, these parties grudgingly rejoined the contest. On the other side of the political spectrum, the SDS also threatened to withdraw from the election, in protest at the decertification of voters from the lists used in the 1997 presidential vote (particularly those who had speculatively viewed Brčko as a 'future municipality'). However, these confrontations were overshadowed in late August when the simmering confrontation within the RS between 'reformists' based in Banja Luka (led by Biljana Plavšić) and 'hardliners' based in Pale (led by Radovan Karadžić) resulted in violent civil unrest on the streets of Brčko. Karadžić supporters

took to the streets, directing their anger at the international agencies such as the OHR and OSCE, which they labelled “the occupying army” (ICG, 1998: 6). A small IPTF police station was ransacked, and a number of S-For, OHR and UN vehicles were destroyed, resulting in the injury of several international workers. This riot clearly demonstrated the control of the Pale SDS over the local DP population and police. As Griffiths (1998) notes, these acts also illustrated the attitude of DPs toward members of the international agencies in Brčko (Griffiths, 1998: 72).

It could be expected that this violence would harden international agencies against manipulation of the Municipal elections and urge them to take action against the SDS. However, this was not the case. Following the riots, the SDS continued to threaten a boycott of the elections, aware that their hegemony within the political administration of Brčko town was under threat. Their final participation in the election was secured at the last minute when the OSCE discovered an ‘error’ that boosted the electoral register of the Municipality by 2 660 names. This irregularity has never had adequate explanation by the OSCE or the OHR, and there was widespread suspicion of the events surrounding the ‘lost voters’. The ICG (1997) reflected the attitudes of many international observers:

Deals struck in smoke-filled rooms to “save” this weekends poll may have compromised the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s first post-war municipal election. Unless the elections supervisory body can provide a full and transparent explanation of these 11th hour agreements, the election must be considered flawed.

(International Crisis Group, 1997: 1)

It has been suggested that the “11th hour agreements” with the SDS, coupled with the OSCE’s decision to limit the election to Brčko town, were designed to prevent a Federation party (such as the SDA) winning the election (Griffiths, 1998: 81). While it is difficult to speculate on the motivations behind these initiatives, the result certainly helped the SDS maintain control of Brčko, albeit sharing power with representatives from the SDA, SDP and HDZ. This avoided the security-threatening situation of an outright SDA victory, and left the OHR claiming a victory for a



multi-ethnic democratic Brčko (OHR, 1997b). Following the election, the Supervisor issued a Supervisory Order outlining the structure of the new Brčko Municipal Government (OHR, 1997c). At its heart was the declaration that the Brčko Municipal Assembly would have a president, vice president and secretary, with all three posts held by individuals of different nationalities. Similarly, the president of the executive board of the municipality (the Mayor) would have two deputies, again all three of different nationalities. This structure and multi-ethnic weighting would be replicated in future multi-ethnic administrations in Brčko. The Supervisory Order was careful to specify that the Supervisor retained control of the section of specific parties that would sit in the assembly:

The President and the Vice-President of the executive board shall ensure that the staff composition of the municipal administration of Brčko...shall reflect the composition of the population of the RS Municipality of Brčko, based on the voters registry and as reflected by the results of the municipal elections of 13 and 14 September 1997. After the technical certification of the municipal elections, the Supervisor shall inform the Parties of the exact proportion which is to form the basis for the composition of the multi-ethnic administration in Brčko.

(OHR: 1997c, paragraph 5)

This order marks the first attempt by the OHR to establish a multi-ethnic government in Brčko. The wording of the pronouncement has since met criticism, not least from David Chandler (1999) who portrays this Supervisory Order as an annulment of the municipal elections, “only for the international community to select the structure and make-up of the new Brčko administration” (Chandler, 1999: 87). While this is partly true, it misses the origins of the electoral engineering that took place in Brčko over 1997. Had the OSCE held the election across the former Municipality, then the outcome would have handed Brčko town back to the Federation. After the orchestrated riots of August 1997, there seemed to be no doubt that such a hand over of power would present a significant security threat to the international agencies working in Brčko. In the post-conflict climate of nationalist

party politics where voting was occurring almost exclusively down ethnic lines, the control by the OSCE over who was eligible to vote was equivalent to controlling the result itself. The Supervisory Order issued after the election was less influential in dictating the ethnic constitution of the new municipal authorities than the manipulation of voter registration by the OSCE before it. This marked a lost opportunity for the electorate, the OHR and the OSCE as these would turn out to be the last elections in Brčko for seven years.

The internationally orchestrated multi-ethnic administration in Brčko continued to leave the result of the arbitration tribunal in the balance. The litany of Serb violations of Dayton continued, in particular through barriers to freedom of movement and blocking the return of refugees. However, the rift between Karadžić's hardliners and Plavsić's reformists grew within the authorities of the RS. The OHR grasped this opportunity and, in November 1997, Ambassador Farrand met Plavsić in Banja Luka to seek endorsement for the new administration in Brčko. Plavsić, apparently reluctantly, endorsed the parliament and suggested candidates for the Serb executive positions that were loyal to her and willing to cooperate with the OHR (ICG, 1998: 7). In January 1998, Plavsić went further in establishing a new pro-Dayton political party (the SNS) and appointing Milorad Dodik, a political moderate, as Prime Minister of the RS. In a speech given on the night, Dodik rejected the philosophy of the SDS, called upon the RS to comply with the Dayton agreement, and espoused the democratization of RS society (OHR, 1998: paragraph 10).

These developments within RS had a significant impact on the arbitration process. A final announcement was scheduled for March 1998 and, in light of the continued Dayton non-compliance by the RS in Brčko, there were predictions that the entire municipality would be handed to the Federation. While recognising the moral arguments to making this shift, the arbitral tribunal resisted, citing the new political climate in the RS and the prospect of future returns and freedom of movement. Prior to the declaration of March 1998, Milorad Dodik had outlined a new vision for the IEHL in Brčko in what became a highly influential testimony to

the arbitration tribunal:

[...] he went on to say that, if nationalist politics were put to one side and Bosnia and Herzegovina became truly democratic, the “IEBL will be an irrelevant issue” – apparently meaning that the IEBL would cease to have any more political effect than the border between, for example, two internal political districts of a Western European country.

(Supplementary Award, paragraph 11 in OHR, 2000a: 265)

The dismantling of the political relevance of the IEBL was a central aim of the Dayton agreement and the arbitration panel saw that a final decision on Brčko could destabilise the fledgling administration of Dodik and thus undermine his moderate politics. It seems that the Brčko decision was the only leverage that the OHR had over the RS, and to lose it would perhaps jeopardise the implementation of Dayton in other parts of Bosnia. To a certain extent this was also true of the Federation, where the dismal returns situation in Sarajevo was cited as a reason why a final decision in their favour was inappropriate at that time (ICG, 2003: 6). To this end, the tribunal deferred the decision once again for one year, with a warning that unless significant developments were made in the implementation of the Dayton agreement by both sides then the pre-war municipality would be reunited as a ‘neutral’ district outside the exclusive control (ICG, 2003: 6). In an uncharacteristically metaphoric passage of the Supplementary Award, the tribunal declared that continued international supervision was necessary as the multi-ethnic institutions they have been “nurturing are still very shallow rooted” (Supplementary Award, paragraph 14 in OHR, 2000a: 266). This casting of the OHR as a benevolent gardener is perhaps a misrepresentation of the extent of their powers. Following this award, the Bonn Peace Implementation Conference granted the same executive and legislative authority to the Brčko Supervisor that had been previously granted to the High Representative in Sarajevo (what are referred to as the ‘Bonn Powers’). This comprised the power to sack any public official who obstructed Dayton implementation (that is, the returns process, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the revival of the economy) and the ability to pass any law that was

perceived to help such implementation.

4.2.3 The Final Award

At their meeting in March 1999, the arbitration panel was under considerable pressure to make a final decision. It was increasingly apparent that in addition to the intransigence of the local politicians, the uncertainty regarding Brčko's future was itself acting as a barrier to the implementation of the Dayton agreement. The 'new political dawn' in the RS, much anticipated by the March 1998 supplementary award, was thwarted at the next electoral opportunity as the ultra-nationalist Nikola Poplasen defeated Biljana Plavsić's SNS party at the September presidential elections. This result placed Milorad Dodik in a difficult position as RS Prime Minister, and Poplasen set about attempting to destabilise his government. These actions led to the High Representative, then Carlos Westendorp, to sack Poplasen for abuse of power, coincidentally on the same day (March 5th 1999) as the arbitration tribunal announced the Final Award. Despite this political context, the tribunal decided on the 'neutral district' approach, perhaps unsurprisingly as this option had been circulating for some time as the preferred outcome from international agencies and commentators (see in particular ICG, 1998). At the heart of the Final Award was the unification of the pre-war Brčko municipality:

[...] upon the effective date to be established by the Supervisor each entity shall be deemed to have delegated all of its powers of governance within the pre-war Brčko Opština to a new institution, a new multi-ethnic democratic government to be known as "The Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina" under the exclusive sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The legal effect will be permanently to suspend all of the legal authority of both entities within the Opština [municipality] and to recreate it as a single administrative unit.

(Final Award, paragraph 9 in OHR, 2000a: 284-285)

This decision meant that Brčko would nominally be part of both Entities, their territory uniquely overlapping, while the Bosnian state-level institutions would

protect the interests of the District itself. This solution meant that the Entities would both 'gain' territory even as they 'lost' administrative authority (ICG, 2003: 7). This consolation was not enough to stop the resignation of Milorad Dodik in protest at what was perceived by many in the RS as the division of Serb territory in Bosnia. However, the resignation had little real impact as Dodik remained the *de facto* prime minister as he was the only person with the votes to form a proper government and the only possible interlocutor for the OHR (ICG, 2003: 8). Serb discontent was exacerbated by the outbreak of NATO bombing in Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in late March 1999 at the culmination of the Kosovo crisis. Attempts were made by the FRY government to draw Bosnia, and the RS in particular, into the conflict through media campaigns depicting the bombing as an act of aggression on the Serb people as a whole (ICG, 2001: 7). These attempts were broadly unsuccessful, perhaps on account of the tacit threat by the NATO forces that if Serb behaviour rendered the security situation in Bosnia unstable then the bridges across the River Drina that joined the RS with FRY would be destroyed (ICG, 2001: 8-9).

In the context of the Serb anger at the perceived injustice of the Poplasen sacking/arbitration decision/NATO bombing trinity, the Final Award's reliance upon the protective role of the Bosnian state over the independence of Brčko was optimistic. In reality, with the central institutions left so weak following the Dayton Agreement (as opposed to the strong Entities), the Final Award is underwritten by a commitment for intensified international supervision to defend the interests of the District from incursions from either entity until such time that the state can take over this role. The District Supervisor at the time of my research in Brčko, US Ambassador Henry Clarke, saw entity encroachments as one of the key future threats to Brčko: he felt that a strong District was a necessity "otherwise the Entities will eat Brčko alive when the Supervisor is gone. It sounds a little dramatic but if you knew how much time I spent worrying about RS encroachments on Brčko in particular then you would know why I am inclined to use strong words"⁷. The objective of the Final Award appears two-fold: establishing a multi-ethnic democratic District with strong connections to the Bosnian state, while producing an

⁷ Interview with Ambassador Clarke, Brčko 24th March 2003.

independent structure of governance over the territory that has the strength to resist incursions by either entity.

The role of the Supervisor, and that of the Brčko OHR more broadly, has been to implement the Final Award (indeed, in September 2002 the OHR Brčko office, formerly ‘OHR-North’, changed its name to ‘The Office of the Final Award’). When interviewed, the Supervisor was clear about his duty, while attending to criticisms of his comprehensive powers (see Chandler, 2000):

I try not to appear dictatorial but everyone knows my agenda: it is the Final Award, you can go and read it. It says basically change everything, and my predecessors and I think that you cannot change everything at its present level but you have to improve it as you go along.

(Interview with Ambassador Clarke, the Brčko Supervisor 24th March 2003)

However, simply *reading* the Final Award does not give a full indication of its remit, as the Arbitration Tribunal left much of the detail (and more significant substance) to the Supervisor’s individual discretion. The creation of a multi-ethnic District Assembly, an aim at the heart of the Final Award, reflects the centralised power of the Supervisor:

All legislative responsibilities within the District shall be vested in the District Assembly. The total membership, composition and modality of selection of the Assembly shall be specified *by the Supervisor* in the Statute for District Government. The initial election of members of the Assembly shall take place when and *as directed by the Supervisor*, and subsequent elections shall take place as provided by the enactment of the Assembly *with approval of the Supervisor*. If he deems it necessary, *the Supervisor may devise and incorporate* into the Statute an “ethnic formula” designed to minimize the incentive for any ethnic group to seek to increase its population in the District in order to achieve exclusive political control [...]

(Annex to the Final Award, Paragraph 2 in OHR, 2000a: 285 emphases added)

This extract illustrates the comprehensive powers vested in the Brčko Supervisor, as the head of Brčko OHR, following the Final Award. These powers can be best understood as an accumulation of ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989). While the OHR comprised one of a number of international and local agencies involved in implementing the Final Award, its capacity to legitimise activities and institutions in the wake of the Final Award point to its accumulation of symbolic capital. Bourdieu defined symbolic capital as “the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu, 1989: 23). Steven Engler (2003) suggests that symbolic capital is better thought of as “statist capital”, as it is the modern state that has claimed the right of legitimization and naturalization of social difference (Engler, 2003: 446). This practice of legitimization is termed by Engler as ‘consecration’ as he argues that in a pre-modern era religion was the primary holder of symbolic capital (Engler, 2003: 451). One attribute of such consecration is, according to Bourdieu (1989), that it confers upon the perspective of the state an absolute, universal value, thus “snatching it from a relativity that is by definition inherent in every point of view, as a view taken from a particular point in social space” (Bourdieu, 1989: 22). Such mechanisms of consecration can lead to what Bourdieu refers to as *symbolic violence*, as those who do not have the ‘means of speech’ or do not know how to ‘take the floor’, can only see themselves in the words or the discourses of others - that is, those who can name and represent (Mahar *et al.*, 1990: 14).

Not only did the Final Award provide the symbolic capital necessary for the Supervisor to consecrate Brčko District, it also enabled the Supervisor to set the discourses and terms through which the District was understood and reproduced. This authority demonstrates how, in conjunction with a range of international and local agencies, the Supervisor improvised the role of the state following the Final Award. Since Brčko District was demilitarised following the conflict and following the arrival of S-For troops at Camp McGovern in the outskirts of the town the Supervisor retained a monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Weber, 1968). The Supervisor thus monopolised the means of violence and had accumulated the symbolic capital to define threat. The effects of these processes of legitimisation are

explored below through an examination of the production of the political, economic and symbolic landscapes of Brčko.

4.3 The Political Landscape

Following the establishment of Brčko District on March 8th 2000, the Supervisor set to work dissolving the former Municipal Assemblies of Brčko Grad, Ravne-Brčko and Brčko-Rahić and reforming them into one District Government and Assembly. The District Government consisted of a Mayor and nine government department heads, while the Assembly involved the appointment of a speaker and twenty-nine councillors. The Supervisor chose these individuals from the three post-war municipal councils that had been established over the territory of Brčko District. Members were also picked from the fledgling civil society organisations in the town. One former OHR employee recounted how an individual had been ‘awarded’ a place on the District Assembly because of their efforts in establishing an NGO⁸. On several occasions over the fieldwork period individuals referred to the power of the Supervisor, and even the appointed Mayor moved off a sensitive topic by exclaiming that he had to stop talking about it “or the Supervisor will replace me!”⁹ The supervisor himself alluded to his control over individual careers by stating that he could find out any information he wished from the District Government “as the guy would be in fear of his job [laughs]”.¹⁰ As suggested in the Final Award, the composition of the new structures of governance within Brčko District followed a strict “ethnic formula”¹¹, with a Serb Mayor, a Bosnijak as speaker in the Assembly and a Croat deputy speaker. Such roles reflect the ethnic make-up of the District in the 1991 census, which has been ‘fixed’ as the definitive yardstick for the demographic constitution of former Yugoslavia. The symbolic capital of the Supervisor and OHR is demonstrated in this reduction of multi-ethnicity to a mathematical formula of ethnic weightings within the District Government. This

⁸ Interview with former Brčko OHR Official, Brčko 19th May 2003.

⁹ Interview with the Brčko Mayor 8th May 2003.

¹⁰ Interview with Ambassador Clarke, Brčko 24th April 2003.

¹¹ This is how it is described in the Annex to the Final Award (OHR, 2000a: 285).

approach seems to support Hayden's (1996) assertion that "extreme nationalism in the former Yugoslavia ha[s] not been only a matter of imagining allegedly 'primordial' communities, but rather of making existing heterogeneous ones unimaginable" (Hayden, 1996: 783 in Campbell, 1999: 401). This sentiment has been reproduced within the "ethnic formula" approach, where each politician can be reduced to a member of an ethnic group.

As District elections were not held until October 2004, there had been no opportunity over the fieldwork period to examine whether the reform within Brčko District has been sustainable without interference from the OHR. Even within the existing District administrations the intervention of the Supervisor has been critical to the decision-making processes. Each politically sensitive decision (such as the reintegration of the police or schools) has ended in deadlock within District Government, with both sides acknowledging that if a decision cannot be reached through the Assembly voting system then the Supervisor will merely impose it (as has happened on both occasions). There appears to be a certain measure of pride and pragmatism about this approach, as characterised by the viewpoint of this former Brčko OHR Official:

Ninety percent of the success of Brčko District specifically has been because there is no democracy here. That is why it has been successful. It is a purely pragmatic point of view [...] Right from the very beginning certainly from the beginning of the supervisory regime we did not seek to do things by consensus. It was just imposed. It is not simply the councillors and heads of government and people like that it has happened in every single area even before we created the District. There is a simple example of the multi-ethnicisation of the police. We didn't hold a meeting to get people to agree that multi-ethnicisation was a good idea we just imposed it on them and said "this is what you will do". It was nothing to do with how many of each of the particular nations there were in the District at that time, we just took the view that that is what we will do. And the same with a whole load of areas. You know, 'democracy' came fairly low down the list of what was required in terms of getting the job done.

(Brčko OHR Official, 2nd June 2003)

This comment would suggest that the mathematical ‘multi-ethnicity’ (as an indicator of progress in terms of the Final Award) has taken precedence over democratic participation or reaching a debated (and perhaps contested) resolution concerning the form of new District institutions. This attitude seems to have stifled genuine political debate within the new District government, as there is little to gain for representatives of parties in opposition to the Final Award in attempting to reach consensus (and thus incur the wrath of the wider political party and potentially face removal from party lists). On the other hand, less important political decisions are regularly made with complete consensus and little debate, as individual members of the Assembly do not want to “put their heads above the parapet”¹² and risk the wrath of the Supervisor.

Similar to the declarations of ‘multi-ethnicity’ based upon selective recruitment of candidates of the ‘right’ ethnic origin, this approach to democratization demonstrates the symbolic capital of the District Supervisor. The Supervisor uses this capital to label the activities of the District Government and Assembly as ‘democracy’. This narrow interpretation suggests a performance of democracy where political debate is played out in scenes, in which the OHR District Supervisor provides the actors, scenery and script. The lack of a District election is, contrary to many indicators of democratic consolidation (for example Dahl, 1986), perceived as unimportant, as the definition of democracy assumed by the OHR facilitates the widening of public opportunity to monitor the governing process, providing an ‘audience’ for the theatre of democracy. The Supervisor himself saw the increasing ‘transparency’ of the District administrative structures as evidence of increasing ‘democratization’. In a particularly candid passage of the interview, he commented on the new avenues of participation created in Brčko District:

¹² Interview with Brčko OHR Official, Brčko 2nd June 2003.

The Assembly meetings are open and most of them are recorded more or less endlessly, well at least by Brčko Radio and sometimes by others. I mean, I don't go over there all the time because it would make them look like more of a rubber stamp than they already are [laughs] But when I do go over there do I see Business representatives and NGO representatives sitting in the audience watching what is going on? No I don't. Do I hear councillors discussing their meetings with people representing groups of citizens other than party meetings? Not much.

(Interview with Ambassador Clarke, 24th April 2003)

Despite the seeming satisfaction with an election-less democracy, there is an acknowledgement that a vote will be required in the near future. The reason given for the delay in District elections is that the Supervisor is waiting for the emergence of “political parties with ‘Brčko-based agendas’”¹³. In doing so, he exposes an underlying motivation to wait for the support base of the nationalist parties, in particular the dominant SDS (Serb Democratic Party), to diminish. The International Crisis Group, in a report entitled *Bosnia's Brčko: Getting In, Getting On and Getting Out* (2003), perceives a clear link between nationalist politics and the election delay:

[...] the US is opposed to calling elections that the SDS might win. As one diplomat remarked, all parties in BiH may be corrupt, but the SDS is also ‘evil’. An SDS victory might undo everything.

(International Crisis Group, 2003: 29)

This evidence would suggest that the OHR and the District Supervisor have placed curtailing nationalist politics at the heart of establishing ‘multi-ethnic democracy’ in Brčko District. However, the absence of nationalist political parties from the District government and the attempt to empower moderate political participation has only strengthened the position of such nationalist parties in Brčko.

From their marginalised positions, these political parties have been able to criticise the internationally appointed members of the government and focus on building popular support for the elections, when they eventually happen. Rather than establish 'a Brčko-based agenda' the most popular parties (the Serb SDS, the Bosniak SDA and the Croatian HDZ) see the greatest political capital in supporting 'their' nationality. The OHR has employed other less direct strategies in an attempt to attempt to undermine these parties, such as restricting access to the training schemes of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), an American NGO providing campaign training for the future election. Such acts, however, only serve to strengthen the legitimacy of these parties, as they are seen to be independent of international control, unlike the more moderate politicians engaged in the performance in the District Government. While the OHR attempts to link democracy with non-nationalism, the outcome seems contradictory. By trying to oversee and mathematically build a 'multi-ethnic democracy', the lack of critical democratic participation and debate appears to only strengthen the nationalist political parties that are waiting to exploit a future election.

In attempting to construct the new political constituency of 'Brčko District', the OHR made efforts to establish a 'multi-ethnic' and 'democratic' administration. Rather than devolving power away from the OHR or Supervisor, this process demonstrates the symbolic power of these international actors in declaring certain activities and institutions as legitimate. Through the Supervisors intervention the discourses were set through which the political landscape could be understood. These activities and powers demonstrate the OHR as an 'improvised state', stepping in to perform consecration in the absence of a legitimate centralised power. The notion of 'improvisation' is used to draw attention to the collection of local and international agencies that loosely articulate to perform the functions of the state. For example, the USAID-funded District Management Team assisted in policy formation; the OSCE engaged with public administration reform; and the UN trained the police through the IPTF. In addition, the entity governments (RS and Federation) retained a presence in the District in an attempt to hold some jurisdiction

¹³ Interview with OHR Official, Brčko 24th May 2003.

over their 'lost' territory. All of these organisations could not only be 'trumped' by the symbolic capital held by the Brčko Supervisor, but their practices were often phrased (intentionally or not) in official discourses that were initially legitimised by the OHR. A central part of such discourses is the primacy given to economic stability in the future of Brčko District.

4.4 The Economic Landscape

The economy in Bosnia had been ravaged by conflict, reflected in a 65 percent fall in the per capita GDP between 1990 and 2000, from \$10 725 to \$4 370 (UNDP, 2002: 11). This decrease in GDP was not consistent across the two Entities with the RS suffering a greater downturn in economic performance on account of larger army pension commitments, insufficient collection of taxes and, more significantly, the low levels of international aid following the conflict. As a consequence of this disparity: in 2002 the UNDP estimated that 24.8 percent of the RS population lived 'general poverty'¹⁴, as compared to 15.6 percent of the Federation population (UNDP, 2002: 51). In addition, over this period criminality had grown, in particular war profiteering through the trafficking of arms, drugs and people across Bosnian territory (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

This trio of economic deterioration, poor entity harmonization and high levels of criminality were acutely felt in Brčko. As discussed in Chapter 3, due to its location on the river Sava, Brčko had been a thriving port before the war, and also the location of a meat-canning factory '*Bimeks*' (see Figure 4.4 overleaf), a vegetable oil factory '*Bimal*' (see Figure 4.5 overleaf) and a large shoe factory '*Izbor*' (see Figure 4.2 above). All three of these industries had closed, or reduced production to nearly zero, following the end of the conflict. In terms of harmonization, the division of Brčko District between the RS and the Federation in the post war period saw differential support to either 'side', with little aid or funding coming into the Serb town until after the announcement of Final Award and

¹⁴ The line for 'general poverty' was calculated as on or below 1843KM (approximately £615) per year (UNDP, 2002: 50).

considerable difficulties in terms of equalising levels of taxation and social welfare (Sommers, 2002). In addition to these harmonisation difficulties, Brčko became renowned in the post-war period as an area of criminality and trafficking. The Brčko area had acted as a transit point not only between the two Entities, but also between Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. The economic effect of this location is perhaps best demonstrated by the emergence of Arizona Market during the conflict. This is a 35-acre site around ten miles south of Brčko, located close to the frontlines that had been cleared of mines by UNPROFOR to allow trading, with the Pentagon apparently supplying \$40 000 of the start-up costs (Andreas, 2004: 46). While the Market retains a role selling clothes and produce, in the post-war period its de-regulated nature has led to it gaining notoriety as a focal point of arms smuggling and human trafficking.

This impoverished and criminalised economic situation in Brčko ensured that the Final Award provided a mandate for Supervisorial intervention:

It being clear that one of the main causes of tension in the Brčko area is its general economic depression and high rate of unemployment, all relevant international institutions are strongly encouraged to support the Supervisor in his [sic] efforts to revitalise the District's economy in the interests of reducing tensions in the area and promoting the cause of international peace.

(Final Award, Paragraph 46 in OHR, 2000a: 282)

This discursive tactic of forging a link between “international peace” and the economic development of Brčko District handed full authority to the Supervisor to implement whichever strategies were deemed necessary to improve the economic conditions of the District. This approach has yielded some measure of success, as noted in a recent ICG report:



Figure 4.4 'Bimeks', Brčko
(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 4.5 'Bimal', Brčko
(Source: Author's collection)

The establishment of fiscal discipline, a sensible and effective tax regime, and a business-friendly environment have resulted in significant foreign investment, a promising privatisation program, and the highest average wages in the country.

(International Crisis Group, 2003: i)

This healthy report, however, masks the increased intervention, control and management that have been required to realise such economic vitality. Economic improvement has been won in Brčko District at the cost of strengthening the statist, or symbolic, capital of the Supervisor.

As democracy was defined by the supervisory regime in narrow terms as transparency, economic development has been cast in terms of security for private capital. The privatisation scheme in Brčko has been rapid and comprehensive, with thirty enterprises being prepared for sale in 2000. By January 2004, 16 enterprises had been privatised within Brčko, creating 1 112 jobs (Clarke, 2004: 20). On account of the logistical difficulties of ameliorating the laws of the Federation and the RS, the Supervisor drew on his symbolic resources (in this case 'Supervisory Orders') to expedite the process. Henry Clarke, Supervisor from 2001-2004, explained this process:

[...] it soon became clear there would be no privatization in Brčko unless the Supervisor launched it. Rather than impose a law, I issued a series of Supervisory Orders having a similar effect.

(Clarke, 2004: 10)

Through the release of Supervisory Orders the privatisation process revitalised the authority of the District Supervisor. In addition, by granting primacy to privatisation as the preferred discourse of economic reform, the improvised state was also strengthened through the need for 'foreign expertise' to assist the District Government. This is most explicitly demonstrated by the formation in 1999 of the

District Management Team (DMT), run until 2002 by Washington-based Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) and funded by the USAID. This group assisted in the privatisation process through techniques such as the preparation of “concept papers” which were “adopted by the international supervisory authority” (Morfit and Feit: 2002: 4).

The economic reform in Brčko demonstrates the symbolic capital of the Supervisor exercised through the ability to confer legality on certain practices (such as privatisation) and illegality on others. This division between legitimate and illegitimate economic activity did not seem an easy one to make in Brčko District. The repeated use of ‘black’ and ‘grey’ economies in Brčko terminology reflects the existence of a socially-constructed sliding scale between legality and illegality of economic practices. This seems to support Carolyn Nordstrom’s (2003) assertion that “clear distinctions between legal and illegal, state and non-state, or local and international are often impossible to make” (Nordstrom, 2003: 332). This hybridity was demonstrated in an exchange with the District Mayor (DM) during a fieldwork interview:

DM: What we need in Brčko is a casino, perhaps in the old hotel Revena. If we had a casino we could put a large sign outside it that said, “this casino is funding the schools of Brčko”.

AJ: But Brčko already has a Casino in the boat moored on the Sava [Figure 4.6 overleaf].

DM: [smiles] Shhh! That one is illegal.

(Excerpt from an interview with the Brčko District Mayor, Brčko 8th May
2003)



Figure 4.6 The casino boat 'Galeb', Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

Though the Supervisor did not confer legality on the boat casino, neither was there the political will to remove it. This 'official non-existence' was evident in other areas of economic reform, such as the regulation and privatisation of public housing. The demand for housing in Brčko has far outstripped supply since the conflict on account of the large number of Serb DPs in the town and the relatively high levels of return. To meet this demand extra floors had been built illegally on top of existing residential buildings (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8 overleaf). This was described by a UN Official in Brčko as "a neat idea"¹⁵ to cater for the increased population in the town. Like the casino boat there was no mention of these extra floors in official documentation such as court lists or OHR documents, and they were neither regulated nor was it clear who owned them. While this was proving a serious barrier to privatisation it was not until there was a serious fire in April 2003 (Figure 4.9) that the Supervisor

¹⁵ Programme Manager UNDP Brčko Local Action Programme, Brčko 18th February 2003.



Figure 4.7 Building with an extra floor, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 4.8 Building with an extra floor, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 4.9 Brčko fire, April 2003

(Source: Author's collection)

intervened to ensure that “all issues related to public buildings are clearly regulated before the process of privatisation of the apartments is concluded” (OHR, 2003). Again, it was through the deployment of a Supervisory Order that the apartments were rendered legal and visible to the law (through inspections and regulation) whilst also functioning as a catalyst to the privatisation process.

The most controversial example of the production of illegality and the associated incorporation of economic activity into the gaze of the improvised state is the case of Arizona Market. By 2002, the Market had grown to over 2 500 stalls, sprawling next to the main road between Brčko and Tuzla (see Figure 4.10 overleaf). As discussed above, the Market was janus-faced: it was a multi-ethnic goods and produce trading area with a regular cattle market representing “an engine of peace” (Morfit and Feit: 2002), and at the same time, a zone of human trafficking, drugs smuggling and arms trading (see Sherwell, 2000). The former sentiment is further evidence of the primacy given to mathematical multi-ethnicity in Brčko, as any activity, regardless of legality, is given a positive sheen by the existence of people

from 'different ethnicities' carrying it out. From 1999 onwards, preparations were made to privatise Arizona Market. Following an EU and UNICEF co-initiative in 2001 entitled 'STOP', the brothels and trafficking way-stations were shut down at Arizona Market, representing another manifestation of the improvised nature of the state in Brčko District. The DMT formulated a concept paper detailing a strategy to legitimise trade at Arizona and register all of the stallholders directed towards encouraging private investment (Morfit and Feit, 2002). This seems a particularly audacious proposal, as Arizona Market could be seen as the most privatised space imaginable with little or no state intervention or regulation. The idea of attempting to encourage further private investment demonstrates the symbolic capital of legitimising certain investment. One of the key difficulties behind the proposed privatisation of Arizona Market was purchasing the land, rumoured to belong to a Croatian 'mafia group' (see Voss, 2001). This was resolved through a compulsory purchase order in 2002, bringing this site under the gaze of legal regulation and legislation for the first time in ten years. Following a bidding process the site and market were sold to *ItalProjekt*, an Italian-Bosnian joint venture, which held plans to redevelop the market as a large shopping complex, with all the stores in uniform warehouses.



Figure 4.10 Arizona Market, Brčko District

(Source: Author's collection)

This process of privatisation rendered Arizona visible to the instruments of taxation and regulation, but when I interviewed a stallholder she seemed uninterested, commenting: “really, we pay our money to the Croats or to the people from *ItalProjekt*, it makes no difference to us”¹⁶. This comment provides an insight into the interchangeable nature of the ‘state’ in a system of uncertainty and improvisation. The stallholder was referring to paying for the stall in order to guarantee security, look after the interests of the Market and pay for external lighting. Arizona Market was far from anarchy prior to ‘regulation’, but was similarly regulated through instruments that were invisible to the gaze of the state. This scenario of institutionalisation and regulation conjures images of Nordstrom’s “non-state sovereignty”, used to describe the governance exercised by networks of ‘informal’ actors (Nordstrom, 2003: 340). While privatisation has not removed these patterns of regulation, they will continue to exist and could be defined as acts of resistance (see Scott, 1985), it has brought them into the machinations of the improvised state in Brčko District.

These examples demonstrate that the economic management of Brčko should not be conceived as a technical matter, divorced from more ‘political issues’. Since the Final Award, the rendering of economic practice as privatisation has revitalised the authority of the District Supervisor and strengthened the agencies of the improvised state as they have been granted the power to legitimise certain practices. These practices of state regulation have operated through a variety of techniques and tactics, including passing laws, Supervisory Orders and concept papers. At the same time, the District Government has been weakened as assets have been sold and ‘new’ discourses of privatisation have been endorsed. These processes of revitalisation of the improvised state in Brčko District are also reflected in the management of the symbolic landscape.

¹⁶ Interview with Arizona Market Stallholder, Brčko, 3rd May 2003.

4.5 The Symbolic Landscape

As suggested by the comment by the former OHR Official at the start of the chapter, the struggle following the Final Award was “making people think in terms of Brčko District”¹⁷. This effort to create a political community in Brčko District was incorporated into the Final Award, where it was the duty of the Supervisor to ‘neutralise’ the symbolic landscape:

The District Assembly shall determine all symbols for the District, provided that all such symbols shall be politically and ethnically neutral and subject to the approval of the supervisor. There shall be no specific flag for the District, but the flag of one entity will not be flown without the other being on essentially equal terms. Both the Latinic and Cyrillic alphabets will be used on essentially equal terms for all official purposes.

(Final Award, paragraph 11 in OHR, 2000a: 286)

The OHR deemed the Brčko District street names and road signs initial items for ‘neutralisation’ following the Final Award. During the conflict, the Serb forces, in order to invent an historical connection between their people and the urban landscape, had comprehensively renamed the streets. The entire street plan was renamed in 2001 to reflect Brčko’s new ‘multi-ethnic’ status. As new street names were allocated, each building was given a uniform house number plate, designed in the Bosnian colours of yellow and blue (themselves selected by the OHR in Sarajevo as the colours of the Bosnian flag) and clearly displaying the name of the street in both Cyrillic and Latinic Scripts (see Figure 4.11 overleaf). For example, *Bulevar Draža Mihailović* was changed to *Bulevar Mira* (Boulevard of Peace, see Figure 4.12 on page 126) and the central square was renamed *Trg Mladosti* (Youth Square). Specific strategic objectives were also written out of the landscape, such as the main western route leaving Brčko (the primary road in the Serbian ‘northern corridor’) that lost the name *Krajiska Put* (Krajina Way) and was given the name *Dejtonska*

(after the Dayton agreement). In this example the renaming of the street embeds the shift in power relations, as the vision of Greater Serbia (seen as dependent upon a connection with the Krajina) is literally erased, only to be reinscribed with the new vision for Bosnia, that of Dayton. This procedure seems to exemplify the assertion of Azaryahu (1996) that the act of renaming “asserts that a radical restructuring of power relations in society has indeed been accomplished, or is underway, and it indicates a profound reconstruction of social and political institutions” (Azaryahu, 1996: 318).



Figure 4.11 New house number, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

¹⁷ Interview with former OHR Official, Brčko 20th February 2003.



Figure 4.12 *Bulevar Mira, Brčko*

(Source: Author's collection)

The strategy of renaming the streets, while an attempt to banish particular nationalist claims and myths, seems to have been mobilised in an effort to stimulate a collective identity for Brčko. This is a unique effort within post-conflict Bosnia, as other towns and cities in the RS and the Federation have mobilised the labelling of the landscape in order to evoke collective memory and strengthen group identity (Takei, 1998). There are three categories of names that have been chosen for the renaming exercise. The first are those intended to inspire a general multi-ethnic reconciliation (the examples of 'peace' and 'youth' above), names that echo closely the names inscribed on the landscape when the town was under Socialism 1945-1991. The second group of names are those that are designed to naturalise international intervention, while connecting Brčko to other areas of Bosnia ('*Dejtonska*', '*Sarajevska*' or '*Mostarska*' are key examples). The final group of names, and comprising the majority, are those that invoke a shared Yugoslav past, through the deployment of names such as Nikola Tesla (the magnetic fields pioneer) and Ivo Andrić (the Nobel Prize winning author). The popularity of such individuals is universal, moving beyond the confines of ethnicity and recognised as explicitly 'Yugoslav'. It is these powerful referents, with their ability to trigger notions of an

era before conflict and division, which the Brčko renaming process seeks to disseminate.

Another strategy has been to disrupt the landscape through graffiti and tagging. The politics of graffiti is discussed by Tim Cresswell (1996), and in this instance it acts to subvert the strategy of 'neutralisation' and re-inscribe nationalist symbols. Graffiti covers contemporary Brčko, much of it with a national orientation. Figure 4.13 (overleaf) shows a wall near the centre of town daubed with the words, in Cyrillic to situate its nationality, "ЈЕБЕМ ВАМ ДИСТРИКТ" ("Fuck your District"). It is instructive that the word used for the District is not a Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian one, such as *opština* (municipality), but rather 'Distrikt', a localised spelling of the English word. While this is perhaps not surprising as it avoids the possibility of confusion with the RS 'Opštine' which are the entity's central division of the territory (as opposed to the Federation's Cantons), this spelling only seems to reinforce the 'foreign' nature of the District's existence. In another example of Brčko graffiti, the author has used Cyrillic again to write "БОГ И РАДОВАХ" ("God and Radovan"). This comment suggests a battle-cry, with the reference to the Bosnian Serb leader and founder of the SDS, Radovan Karadžić. The interesting point in this example is that the Cyrillic has been corrected, as the author originally wrote a Latinic 'D' as opposed to Cyrillic 'Д' (see enlarged detail of Figure 4.14 overleaf). A similar error can be seen in Figure 4.15, where the graffiti simply reads "СРБИЈА" ("Serbia"), though again the author has corrected their Cyrillic, mistakenly writing a Latinic 'I' instead of a Cyrillic 'И'. These error-strewn examples display better than any others the improvised nationalisms assumed within Bosnia, as people hurry to learn Cyrillic and embrace its nation-defining qualities.



Figure 4.13 Graffiti, Brčko town centre

(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 4.14 Graffiti, Brčko town centre

(Source: Author's collection)



Figure 4.15 Graffiti, Brčko town centre

(Source: Author's collection)

While ‘neutral’ (or Yugoslav) individuals and events have been commemorated in the new street names, there is a significant absence of memorialisation of the 1992-95 conflict itself. As Johnson (1994) notes: “statues, as part of the cityscape or rural landscape, act not only as concentrated nodes but also as circuits of memory where individual elements can be jettisoned from the popular consciousness” (Johnson, 1994: 63). The popular consciousness is guided away from remembering the events of genocide and ‘ethnic cleansing’ that scarred Brčko in 1992 and dramatically changed its demographic constitution (as discussed above). Instead, the Supervisor, in a fashion similar to honouring peace agreement in ‘*Dejtonska*’, invented the tradition of a ‘Brčko District Day’, held on the 8th March each year. By controlling the process of commemoration the OHR is again reflecting its status as the lead agency of the improvised state, controlling which events should be celebrated and which deaths should be mourned¹⁸.

In contrast to the celebrations of ‘District Day’, no monument marks the site of the Luka internment camp in Brčko, and there is no plaque on the shoe factory where the conflict is considered to have broken out. While the collective memory of Brčko is ‘allowed’ to invoke Ivo Andrić or Nikola Tesla in the street names, memories of the conflict are not encouraged. The community should collectively

¹⁸ For insightful discussions of this aspect of state power see Edkins, 2003 and Butler, 2004.

‘forget’. This strategy has historical precedent, as following World War II, Tito employed an approach of equalising the blame for the horrors of the conflict between the Nazis, the (mainly Croatian) Ustaše and the Serbian Četniks. Following a purge of potential opponents from 1945-47, Tito drew a line under the events of the conflict as a strategy for building a cohesive state in Yugoslavia and foster ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ (Judah, 2000: 136).

The lack of commemoration of war atrocities has been encouraged by the OHR, who appear perceive that, due to its absence from the Final Award, this kind of activity is not part of their remit. More than one interview respondent from the OHR described considerations of memorialisation as a “soft issue”¹⁹. However, in place of a cross-national memorial to acknowledge the events of the conflict, partial monuments stand as a testament to specific mythologised historical narratives. One such monument is the ‘Serb Liberation of Brčko’ statue, standing in a green space beside the central traffic intersection in the centre of Brčko (see Figure 4.16). This monument, erected in 1996, marks the ‘victory’ of Serb forces in the town. In the centre of an adjacent car-park stands a statue of Draža Mihailović, erected in 1997 and overlooking the boulevard that used to bear his name (see Figure 4.17). The ‘Serb Liberation of Brčko’ monument and the statue of Draža Mihailović have become popular focal points for the Serb community in Brčko. The ‘Serb Liberation of Brčko Monument’ serves many communal purposes, such acting as a back-drop for wedding photographs or the centre-piece of ceremonies to mark the Battle of Kosovo. The statue of Draža Mihailović appears to have a more popularist attraction, serving as a rallying point for Serb youths following sporting victories. I witnessed such an occasion after Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro) won the Basketball World Championships, an event which prompted a large group to assemble round the Draža statue to sing Serb folk songs and fire bullets into the air. Efforts to the remove these monuments by the OHR have been minimal, they were aware that such actions would “stir nationalist sentiments”²⁰. The recycling of historical myths has long been a connected with the formation and reproduction of

¹⁹ Interview with OHR Official, Brčko 24th May 2003.

²⁰ Interview with OHR Official, Brčko 24th May 2003.



Figure 4.16 Serb Liberation of Brčko Monument, Brčko town centre
(Source: Author's collection)

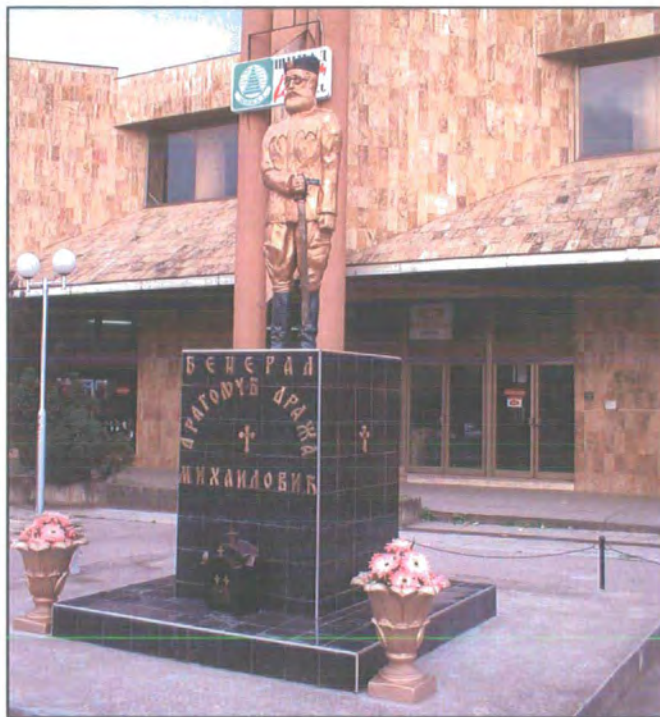


Figure 4.17 Statue of Draža Mihailović, Brčko town centre
(Source: Author's collection)

nationalist identities, and this monument appears to be a clear example of these processes in action. This reflects Bell's (1999) suggestion that:

[...] landscape elements memorialise specific narratives of nationhood, reducing fluid histories into sanitized, concretized myths that anchor the projection of national identity onto physical territory.

(Bell, 1999: 186)

This paradoxical absence and existence of war memorialisation in Brčko echoes the problematic use of post-war justice in Yugoslavia as whole, as the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at the Hague has acted as a substitute for a broader 'truth commission' (as employed in South Africa following the end of the apartheid). Rather than establishing recognised truths and incorporating these into the landscape and traditions of Brčko, the ICTY has merely focussed the blame on two individuals (Goran Jelisić and Ranko Cesić) and pledged to take them to a location far from Brčko. The result is a fractured symbolic landscape where the history of the conflict has become relativised between the different communities. This was indicated in the research interviews: respondents would often respond to questions about Brčko's past with the comment "no one knows what happened in the conflict in Brčko". Through this logic, claims of ethnic cleansing in Brčko are allied to an 'anti-Serb' position rather than as statement of events. This position is being reproduced through international intervention, as all references to ethnic cleansing (and the conflict) have been removed from documents about the town, so as not to deter foreign investment and potential tourists. The only legitimised war damage within this body of literature is infrastructural: a destruction that can be easily rebuilt.

The lack of memorialisation has only served to further fracture the histories of different communities within Brčko. The specific act of non-memorialisation of the conflict has acted as a divisive policy, as the broader debate concerning a renegotiated public sphere has been stifled by international intervention that, while professing otherwise, appears to favour the status quo. As the work of Bell (1999)

and Johnson (1994) suggests, the lack of a commonly recognised memorial marks the greater post-conflict issue of the absence of shared historical truths. The contradictory outcome of attempting to induce a collective ‘forgetting’ has been the continued fracture in historical interpretations of events in the town. It seems inadequate to continue to perceive the ‘public memory’ as a soft issue, one that does not relate to the ‘hard’ issues of economic and political life. The evidence from Brčko would suggest that it is just these imaginaries that continue to fracture symbolic landscape and reproduce the nationalist politics that the improvised state seeks to undermine.

4.6 Conclusion

Following the conflict in Bosnia, Brčko assumed a strategic sensitivity on account of its location at the linking point between the two halves of the RS and providing access for the Federation to Central Europe and the River Sava for trade. This chapter has examined how this sensitivity was resolved through the Final Award that created a new political entity within Bosnia to be known as Brčko District. The implementation of the Final Award saw an escalation in the powers of the international organisations in Brčko, in particular the OHR with the Supervisor at its head. The executive and legislative powers held by the Supervisor can be seen as a form of symbolic capital, a power to grant legitimacy to certain practices, while casting others as illegal or illegitimate. This process has resulted in the state being ‘improvised’ in Brčko by international and local agencies, though ultimately legitimised by the OHR.

This chapter has examined how the improvised state has created the political, economic and symbolic landscapes of Brčko District. In political terms, Brčko District has been heralded as unique in Bosnia as a successful ‘multi-ethnic democracy’. This rhetoric masks, however, the ways in which the Supervisor and OHR have put these aspirations into practice. On the one hand, ‘democracy’ has been operationalised in vague procedural terms, where electoral competition has been replaced by ‘transparent decision making’ as the primary opportunity for

political participation. On the other, multi-ethnicity has been conceived in mathematical terms, involving recruiting people of the 'right' ethnic origin for posts within executive and legislative bodies. Such a quota-based approach, in perpetuating the notion of 'pure' ethnicities, removes the prospect of hybrid or multicultural identities. In terms of the economic landscape, reform has been interpreted as securing Brčko for private investment. While this approach has led to successes in fiscal discipline and economic management, the privatisation initiative has also strengthened the symbolic capital of the Supervisor in deeming certain activities as legal practice. The final section examined the role of the OHR and Supervisor in shaping the symbolic landscape of Brčko in an attempt to create a 'neutral' space purged of nationalist referents. Rather than commemorating the conflict in Brčko, the strategy of the improvised state has been one of encouraging 'forgetting'. In addition, surrogate memorials, such as 'Brčko District Day' only serve to reinforce the symbolic authority of the Supervisory regime and do nothing to encourage testimony or confront the trauma of conflict.

The 'problem' of Brčko, and its 'solution' as a multi-ethnic special district, has provoked intensified international intervention. These practices of intervention have strengthened the sovereignty of an 'improvised state' over Brčko District. This is reflected by the power of the OHR District Supervisor to legitimise certain activities and discourses. As a key example, despite the lack of electoral competition, the 'transparent' processes of the District Government have been signalled by the OHR as evidence of emerging democracy. However, the notion of 'transparency' is only democratic if someone is watching. This power of legitimisation has been justified by the OHR on the basis that there are the opportunities for Brčko citizenry to shape practices of the improvised state. According to the OSCE and OHR, key agents of the improvised state, these opportunities to 'hold the state to account' increase the need for an active 'civil society'. This is nothing new, civil society has long been seen as a mechanism through which the power of the state can be restricted or shaped. What is important for this thesis is that the assumption has been made in Brčko that civil society is represented by the presence of NGOs. Within this logic, the presence of NGOs as

autonomous from the state can be equated with the presence of civil society which, through the transparent practices of the District Government, equates to democracy. The following chapter examines this production of NGOs in Brčko District.

Chapter 5

Local Geopolitics: The emergence of NGOs in Brčko District

5.1 Introduction

The entire system of governance in Bosnia assumes a bridge between policy makers and society. This bridge needs to provide information. Civil society provides this bridge, this need assessment.

(Interview with OHR Official, Sarajevo 28th May 2003)

The previous chapter outlined how Brčko District has been created as a political, economic and symbolic entity following the Final Award, a process that has strengthened the agencies of the improvised state. This chapter will examine how this post-conflict 'solution' has shaped the discourses and practices of NGOs in Brčko. The comment above, made by a senior OHR official in Sarajevo, suggests

that 'civil society' in post-conflict Bosnia should be acting as a conduit for information between the citizens and the state. These remarks reflect a common definition of civil society as a site of political mobilisation and civic participation, autonomous from the organisations of the state. This definition of civil society echoes the Supervisor's comments in the last chapter, when he suggested that NGOs should act as witnesses to the 'transparent' performances of democracy in the newly-formed Brčko District. NGOs are thus cast as civil society organisations, independent from the improvised state and reflecting the beliefs and needs of the Brčko citizenry.

This civil society role represents a fundamental departure from the original function of NGOs in Bosnia. NGOs first emerged in Bosnia as agents within the humanitarian relief effort during the conflict. This humanitarian role was the consequence of the scripting of the conflict as a 'humanitarian disaster' while also reflecting the prominence of NGOs in prevailing development discourses. The post-conflict shift from conduits of humanitarian relief to civil society organisations assumed a dramatic change in the temporality and scale of NGO activity in Bosnia, from short-term internationally funded operations, to long-term locally funded or voluntary organisations. This change in the role of NGOs represents a manifestation of the broader shift in post-conflict Bosnia as international agencies have switched their focus from humanitarian requirements to assisting in the democratic transition.

This chapter examines how such geopolitical scripts of 'humanitarian emergency' and 'democratic transition' are experienced at the local scale. In doing so, it will assess the effects of such discourses as they are interpreted and deployed at the Brčko level. Through an examination of the NGO survey data in Brčko, the difficulties for the NGOs in shifting from delivering aid to representing civil society begin to emerge. In contrast to linear models of NGO development which chart an unproblematic progression from one role to the next, the experiences from Brčko suggest that their function during the conflict has continued to define their post-conflict role. Consequently, NGOs in Brčko have been perceived by the Brčko citizenry as 'wealthy' and 'international' organisations which offer sound

employment opportunities. These contradictory representations suggest a paradox: as international agencies embrace NGOs as locally-embedded civil society actors, simultaneously such organisations are interpreted at the local level as 'new' and 'external', dislocated from existing networks of political participation.

5.2 The Role of NGOs in the Bosnian 'Humanitarian Emergency'

The centrality of NGOs in the international effort during the Bosnian conflict was neither inevitable nor innocent. This section will examine the three intersecting factors which led to the prominent position of NGOs in Bosnia. In the first instance, the geopolitical framing of the conflict as a 'humanitarian disaster' ensured that rather than a political or military response, assistance was materialised through relief and aid. As a second factor, broader shifts in international development policy and practice had seen the rise of NGOs as key partners to western governments and development agencies in the delivery of aid and the realisation of foreign policy. The third catalyst to NGO involvement was the relief effort itself, as security conditions on the ground led intergovernmental agencies to increasingly seek partners in the non-governmental sector.

5.2.1 Geopolitical Framing

Noam Chomsky (1999), in his critical assessment of the 1999 NATO action in Kosovo, draws attention to the importance of geopolitical framing in shaping international interventions in local conflicts. Chomsky demonstrates how NATO governments portrayed the actions of the Yugoslav government, under Slobodan Milošević, on its Albanian population as 'minority oppression', in contrast to the endorsement of similar tactics by Turkey on its Kurdish minority (Chomsky, 1999). These pervasive representations justified opposing interventions. Yugoslavia was subject to NATO air strikes across its territory, hitting key infrastructure in an attempt to destabilise the Milošević government. In contrast, the US has lauded

Turkey as an example of an Islamic democracy and made repeated calls for its membership to the EU. This example points to the importance of wider geopolitical contexts in shaping the interventions of powerful external actors as particular events are 'framed' in terms which support preconfigured policy scripts.

The Bosnian war was geopolitically framed as an intractable and bewildering problem by the governments of Western Europe and the US. The deployment of Balkanistic readings of the conflict, blaming primordial 'ancient ethnic hatreds' for the outbreak of violence, led to two associated international responses. The first, detailed in Chapter 3, was to adopt a diplomatic effort which reproduced the nationalist logic that presumed a division of Bosnia into ethno-national regions. Drawing on Derrida (1994), Campbell (1998a) describes this alignment between territory and identity as "ontopolological", as a connection was forged between the "ontological value of present-being to its *situation*, to the stable and present determination of a locality, the *topos* of territory, native soil, city, body in general" (Derrida, 1994: 82 in Campbell, 1998a: 80, emphasis in Campbell). It is this ontopological thinking that led to the 'provinces' of the Vance Owen Peace Plan (1993), the 'territories' of the Owen Stoltenberg Plan (1993) and finally, perhaps in the purest example of partition, the 'entities' of the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995). In addition, the casting of the conflict as a consequence of ancient ethnic hatreds introduced a moral equivalency suggesting that all sides were equally to blame for the violence and, as such, a decisive military intervention would be impossible. Klaus Dodds (1998) notes the contrast between this strategy and the representation of the first Gulf War, where the conflict was framed in clear moral terms between the 'evil' dictator and the 'civilised' western world (Dodds, 1998: 178). Ontopolological readings, coupled with the invocation of moral equivalency, acted to rule out international military intervention. Instead these geopolitical scripts cast Bosnia as a place of *difference*, ethnically divided and distant from European norms of civic citizenship.

The second and associated international response was to portray the Bosnian conflict as a 'humanitarian disaster'. This depiction continued the suggestion of

moral equivalency, by depicting the violence as almost analogous with a natural disaster and hence did not offer a clear aggressor or victim. While continuing to mystify the causes of the conflict, this representative strategy focussed attention on the outcomes, that of widespread human suffering and material destruction. Attending to these humanitarian outcomes could mediate the worst ravages of the conflict, reducing political pressure to intervene in this long running cycle of violence at the heart of Europe. In contrast to the importance granted to difference in the first geopolitical script, the labelling of the conflict as a humanitarian disaster invoked an essential *similarity* between the peoples of Bosnia (as they were all victims) and the global citizenry, invoking a common humanity (see Kant, 1991).

The script of humanitarianism was easy to commodify through media representations as the comprehensive coverage of the conflict brought Bosnia into the gaze of the global television watching public. These images often challenged the ingrained Balkanism of European and American foreign policies that sought to portray the conflict in terms of ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’. Examples of such challenges can be seen in Maggie O’Kane’s reports for *The Guardian* newspaper which were said to employ an “anti-geopolitical eye” in eschewing dominant political discourses and drawing Bosnia in to a “universe of moral responsibility” (Ó Tuathail, 1996b: 182). These reports challenged the “social production of distance and moral indifference around Bosnia” (Ó Tuathail, 1996b: 182). By cutting through ‘distancing scripts’, media representations of this kind focused on the similarities between those suffering and the audiences in Western Europe and North America. In doing so these reports reminded viewers and readers that those suffering were Europeans, inhabiting a land that until recently had been a holiday destination and had hosted successful international sports competitions, not least the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo in 1984. Rather than the moral distance created by Balkanistic geopolitical scripts of primordial ethnic war and the Balkan vortex, such media representations focussed on the proximity of Bosnia as a cosmopolitan European country.

The discourse of *similarity* was often deployed explicitly to foster public donations for humanitarian relief in Bosnia. The rock band U2 used these strategies in their fundraising song *Miss Sarajevo*, part of the War Child fund raising appeal of 1995. The lyrics comprised a series of questions concerning life for those under siege in Sarajevo:

Is there time for kohl and lipstick?

A time for cutting hair?

Is there a time for high street shopping, to find the right dress to wear?

(U2, 1995)

By drawing on explicit parallels between the listeners' Western consumer lifestyle and those living under persistent threat in Bosnia, U2 were attempting to raise public concern and stimulate donations. These reference points served to reinforce the cultural and social proximity of Bosnia and help foster a sentiment amongst the public of Western Europe and America. The branding of Bosnia as a 'humanitarian disaster', with associated charitable appeals, meant the frustration of the public could be directed towards providing emergency relief, as opposed to demanding a more effective political solution to the causes of the conflict itself.

These geopolitical and media images of Bosnia echo previous contradictory representations of the Balkans. On the one side international diplomatic efforts cast Bosnia as a 'bewildering' distant place of ethnic difference. These scripts were embedded in the past, as the present conflict was perceived as product of the "Balkan ghosts" of historical enmity, conjuring the imagery of Robert Kaplan (1994). In contrast, media representations portrayed Bosnia as operating in the present, through invocations of the cosmopolitanism of Sarajevo, live feed television images to Mostar and as the host of an Olympic games. Though contrastingly casting Bosnia as different and similar, both these scripts assisted in the production of Bosnia as a 'humanitarian disaster'. Military intervention was perceived as impossible, as the roots of the conflict were 'bewildering', while the invocation of proximity provoked

popular opinion that an intervention was required. This intervention took the form of a humanitarian effort, at the centre of which were NGOs.

5.2.2 NGOs as Agents of Development

The prominent role of NGOs in the humanitarian effort in Bosnia reflects the centrality of such institutions within international development policy in the early 1990s. Global development policies had long embraced NGOs as key institutions for stimulating development, in particular, as they were perceived to operate outside formal state structures. Throughout the 1980s, policy makers questioned whether the states of the developing world commanded the authority to effectively govern their territory and, if they could, whether those in control of state functions were concerned with addressing social inequalities within their state borders. International institutions became critical of what were perceived as 'profligate' or 'inefficient' states, in particular as a result of the growing international debt crisis of the 1970s. The World Bank, headed by former US Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, shifted towards a more neo-liberal ideology, rejecting Keynesian approaches of fiscal management and instead advocating development guided by Adam Smith's notion of the 'free hand of the market'. This approach is typified by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, operating in the neo-liberal partnership of the 'Washington Consensus'. As low income countries suffered crippling debts in the wake of oil price rises in the late 1970s, 'solutions' were offered in the form of SAPs that focussed on the reduction in the state's role in shaping economic affairs. The SAPs encouraged countries to abandon protectionism of infant industries and instead establish primary commodity exports, particularly agricultural goods, as the centrepiece of economic strategy (Pender, 2001: 399). As Mkandawire (1998) points out in reference to Africa, "the state was vilified for its weaknesses, its over-extension, [and] its interference with the smooth functioning of the markets" (Mkandawire, 1998: 1). The SAP model therefore fostered the notion of aid

‘conditionality’, where financial assistance was linked to the adoption of a particular set of ‘weak-state’ policies recommended by the World Bank.

In the 1980s, the conditionality of structural adjustment lending was confined to the economic sphere, with the World Bank consistently deferring to national sovereignty on broader political issues (Pender, 2001: 400). However, as structural adjustment lending attracted increasing criticism over the late 1980s and early 1990s, the focus of aid conditionality began to broaden. SAPs were considered to have been a failure in terms of fostering economic development and, instead, poverty levels had risen and income disparities widened. The 1980s became known as the ‘Lost Decade’ for development, as the Gross Domestic Product (GNP) figures for low-income countries stagnated or fell while external debt reached unserviceable levels (Camara Neto and Vernengo, 2002: 7). Even the World Bank’s ‘star performer’ Mexico, which had been regarded as a model for neo-liberal economic management, defaulted on debt payments in 1994 and re-established a dependence on emergency loans (Pender, 2001: 401). In addition, the East Asian Tiger economies, countries that had explicitly avoided the approaches fostered by the Washington Consensus, had managed “the most successful development in history” over the 1980s (Stiglitz, 1998). However, rather than leading to withdrawal of World Bank/IMF involvement, the failure of SAPs to improve economic and social conditions led to the broadening of developmental objectives. The ideology of the free market approach was not rejected outright, but rather seen as part of a series of measures required to ‘improve’ development. The focus of international development agencies turned from macro-economic concerns, operating within and between states, to examining the form and quality of the institutions and processes of governance.

This new development agenda was suitably entitled ‘good governance’ and was first outlined in the World Bank’s (1989) report *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*. This new agenda seemed to answer critics who had suggested that the World Bank and IMF policies had been focused on narrow economic issues at the expense of social and political problems. The attention of

these global development institutions shifted to the operation of power within the state, and in particular on aspects of 'accountability' and 'participation'. While seemingly vague, 'good governance' was variously defined to include some, or all, of the following aspirations: an efficient public service; an independent juridical system and legal framework to enforce contracts; the accountable administration of public funds; an independent public auditor, responsible to a representative legislature; respect for the law and human rights at all levels of government; a pluralist institutional structure, and a free press (Leftwich, 1995: 427). Subsequently, Jenkins (2002) suggests 'good governance' could be operationalised by restructuring state bureaucracies, reforming legal systems, supporting democratic decentralisation and creating accountability-enhancing civil society (Jenkins, 2002: 485).

This broad remit has clear implications for state sovereignty as this change of emphasis indicates disillusionment amongst policy makers with the developmental potential of the state (Howell, 2000). In place of a range of macro-economic issues, the 'good governance' initiative brought a wide range of public and private functions into the gaze of organizations such as the World Bank and IMF. These development organizations incorporated the reform of domestic agencies into the conditionality of developmental aid. While critics have suggested that this reflects a politicization of aid, the World Bank viewed the new agenda as "correcting sub-optimally designed institutions which were ruining otherwise sound policy initiatives" (Jenkins, 2002: 487). Thus, the World Bank cast this 'corrective' approach as merely managerial as opposed to containing any political substance (if that is possible). By deploying managerialist rhetoric that suggested that the problem lay with how the policies were implemented rather than the political underpinnings of the policies themselves, continued structural adjustment policies could be legitimised despite statistics suggesting their failure at solving problems of social welfare. In addition, the inclusion of the adjective 'good' has enabled the raising of evaluative questions about 'proper' procedures, issues of transparency and the quality and process of decision-making (Doornobos, 2001: 101). There are clear

issues of power in the ability to label what governance is 'good' or 'bad', dependent as it is on seemingly subjective criteria established by the same global organisations that formulate interventions. Consequently, 'good governance' initiatives have been criticised for politicising aid conditionality while eroding the sovereignty of individual low-income states. In addition, Mercer (2003) suggests that 'good governance' is merely a "performance" which, while involving a range of new actors, masks a continued commitment to neo-liberal policies (Mercer, 2003: 743).

The primary institutional change heralded by the critique of structural adjustment and the associated discourse of 'good governance' was the emergence of NGOs as the primary partners in development initiatives. 'Partnership' became a key part of the discourse of developmental intervention as non-state actors were enrolled in projects designed and funded by both state and non-state development organisations. Salamon (1994) describes the effects of this policy shift as an 'association revolution', as neo-liberal development strategies facilitated the emergence of NGOs operating outside either the state or the market. Fisher (1997) suggests that NGOs were perceived by development organisations as 'magic bullets', for such was the faith that they would "mysteriously find their target" (Fisher, 1997: 442). This conception of NGOs as a panacea is echoed by Stiles (2002), who notes that NGOs offered donors "a relatively safe and convenient means of avoiding both public and private sector dangers" (Stiles, 2002: 836). Hulme and Edwards (1995) outline two ways in which NGOs were vital to what they call the 'new policy agenda' of neo-liberalism coupled with discourses of 'good governance'. Firstly, while the market is perceived as the most effective route to economic growth and service provision, NGOs are considered vital for accessing those groups that the market fails (Hulme and Edwards: 1995, 5). Secondly, NGOs are seen as vehicles for democratization and the establishment of a sound 'civil society'. In this way, NGOs are perceived as a realm of 'autonomous' organisations that can improve participation in the process of governing while also articulating the demands of the citizenry. In short, they can hold the state to account.

In Bosnia, NGOs were perceived to be particularly important as the territory was branded a 'failed state' where domestic governmental institutions were unable (or unwilling) to protect and provide for its citizens (Kaplan, 1994; Dorff, 1999; Chopra, 2000)¹. This is, of course, only an extension of the logic behind discourses of 'good governance': here the processes of governance were (by certain indicators) considered sub-standard and external assistance was required to ensure improvement. The very notion of 'failed states' raises the question of what qualifies as statehood and how failure is measured (for a discussion of these issues see Milliken and Krause, 2002). The rhetoric of 'failed states' represents a moment when all claims to sovereignty are lost, as external intervention is recast not as a necessary compromise of state sovereignty, but as a requirement for guaranteeing the safety and security of the (now 'stateless') citizenry.

It is through the discourses of 'good governance' and the allied 'association revolution' that NGOs have become key actors in the toolkit of international developmental and humanitarian responses. As Bosnia was depicted as a 'humanitarian disaster' international NGOs established field offices and deployed expatriate staff to assist in the distribution of relief and aid. The centrality of NGOs did not, however, solely emerge from the geopolitical framing of Bosnia and the discourses of global development agencies. The need for NGOs was also crucially shaped by the realisation of the humanitarian effort in Bosnia.

5.2.3 The Need for Partnership

The institutional make-up of the humanitarian effort in Bosnia was not simply a product of development discourses applied in practice, but it was also shaped by the security conditions on the ground. The UNHCR acted as the lead organisation, arriving in 1992 to coordinate the distribution of relief. This marked an

¹ Like most representations within the conflict, this is contested. Some groups (particularly Bosnian Serbs) would perceive the 'failed state' to be Yugoslavia not Bosnia, as the conflict was cast as emerging out of illegal Bosniak secessionism. It is for this reason that some consider the conflict a civil war and others an act of state on state aggression.

“astonishing and unprecedented” transformation of the UNHCR, an agency that was more accustomed to helping individuals that are or may become refugees and had never attempted operational relief on the scale of Bosnia (Rieff, 2002: 132). Conventionally, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) had fulfilled the role of looking after non-combatants in war zones. However, an ICRC convoy carrying food and medical relief on May 18 1992 was attacked as it entered Sarajevo, despite the security guarantees obtained from the parties concerned (ICRC, 1992). Three ICRC staff members were wounded and one of them, Frederic Maurice, died the next day at a Sarajevo hospital. As a result, the ICRC postponed intervention until late 1993, and in the interstices the UNHCR stepped into the logistical vacuum left in the delivery of relief.

The centrepiece of the relief operation in Bosnia, both in terms of substance and media portrayal, was the Sarajevo airlift. As early as April 1992 freedom of movement was restricted around Sarajevo, with Bosnia Serb forces surrounding the city from the hills above. Later that year the only entry or exit for the city’s predominantly Bosniak population was through a narrow tunnel dug under the UN-controlled airport. The airport had been secured by the UN through Resolution 764, passed on July 13th 1992, which called for the deployment of UNPROFOR troops “to ensure the security and functioning of Sarajevo airport and the delivery of humanitarian assistance” (UN, 1992). The importance of controlling the airport extended beyond the clear transportation benefits; occupying this territory also prevented Serb forces from entirely encircling Sarajevo. Over 1993 UNHCR shipped over 51 000 tonnes of supplies into Sarajevo through the airlift. This increased from January 1994 to July 1994 to over 96 600 tonnes, with the monthly food target alone comprising 6 600 tonnes (Chroman, 1995).

The humanitarian effort was not limited to Sarajevo, though this remained the focus of the world’s media over the following four years. The geography of humanitarian action in Bosnia pointed to a certain moral hierarchy, produced through an intersection of geopolitical representations and media coverage. The explicit American sympathies for the Bosniak position in the conflict, as exemplified by the

US government's commitment to the 'lift and strike' policy during negotiations², led to specific targeting of international aid to areas under Bosnijak control. Other areas of Bosnia fell out of the media and public consciousness as the four-year war progressed, and subsequently attracted little in the way of humanitarian relief. Brčko was one such place. As it had been the location of 'ethnic cleansing' it was not considered a priority for humanitarian intervention. A US army officer described how Brčko was considered "too dangerous" for large-scale humanitarian relief until a year after the signing of the Dayton Agreement (Cucolo, 1999). These comments act as a clear example of the entanglement of geopolitical discourses of 'danger' and 'Serb control' during the conflict. Instead, humanitarian intervention in Brčko echoed that of other contested areas in Bosnia where the 'solution' of the UNHCR comprised assisting in the transfer of populations in order to reduce civilian casualties.

On the ground in Bosnia, the inexperience of the UNHCR amplified the need for partnership organisations to assist in the humanitarian effort. In the wake of the 'association revolution' (Salamon, 1994) within the delivery of developmental and emergency assistance, numerous NGOs stepped in to distribute aid in Bosnia and work alongside the UNHCR. By 1993, over 3 000 humanitarian personnel from over 250 organizations carried UNHCR identity cards (Young, 2001: 787). These NGOs varied widely in terms of size and funding: at one end of the scale there were international organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Caritas (the Catholic humanitarian aid and relief organisation), Merhemet (a Muslim charitable association registered in Sweden), Mercy Corps and the International Crisis Group. These groups operated well-funded and large-scale relief operations, establishing offices across Bosnia and deploying expatriate staff to facilitate aid distribution. Many of these organisations began working during the 1991-1992 war in Croatia and simply moved their operation into Bosnia as its need became greater.

² This relates to the lifting of the arms embargo and the striking of Serb positions around Sarajevo (see Silber and Little, 1995: 287 and Chapter 3 of this thesis).

On the other end of the scale, there were smaller organisations and collectives driving humanitarian relief overland, such as the ‘Serious Road Trip’. Milos Stanković (2001), a British Army interpreter present in Sarajevo throughout a large part of the conflict described the relief effort as “a loosely coordinated patchwork of well meaning do-gooders who exposed themselves to horrible risks for no return other than the satisfaction of having delivered some aid” (Stanković, 2001: 64). These improvised aid missions highlight the geographic proximity of the conflict to Western Europe: only a day’s drive from France while nearly commutable from Italy. At this time Bosnia was also the only country in the world where no one required a visa for entry or exit. Thus Bosnia’s proximity to Western Europe, coupled with the absent bureaucratic requirements, lowered the logistical barriers to small NGOs entering the humanitarian effort.

Over the course of the conflict, increasing numbers of NGOs were embroiled in the network of organisations delivering aid to Bosnia. The intersection of the geopolitical framing of Bosnia as a ‘humanitarian disaster’, the centrality of NGOs within development solutions and the inexperience of the UNHCR on the ground ensured that NGOs became key conduits for humanitarian relief. Though much of this work consisted of short-term projects, the signing of the Dayton Accords in 1995 was coupled with a \$5bn ‘Priority Reconstruction Programme’, which ensured that further donor funds were available for NGO work in Bosnia (Miller and Martin, 2003: 145). Despite the continued funding opportunities, the context in which NGOs were operating shifted on account of the Dayton Agreement. Other areas of the world became priorities for the disaster relief NGOs as the geopolitical framing of Bosnia shifted to focus on more long-term peace-building and reconciliation objectives. This paradigm shift was described to me during the fieldwork as a move ‘from emergency to transition’³.

5.3 From ‘Emergency’ to ‘Transition’

³ Interview with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Officer, Sarajevo 29th May 2003.

Despite the signing of the Dayton Agreement and the associated cessation of military violence, the slow pace of international implementation of the Agreement ensured that delivery of humanitarian aid continued to be the predominant concern of NGOs over 1996 and 1997. The Inter Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) continued as a *de facto* border over these years and freedom of movement was still severely restricted. In the case of Brčko the Dayton rhetoric of a unified multi-ethnic democratic Bosnia appeared a long way off as NGOs such as the IRC established humanitarian relief centres in the devastated suburbs of Broduša and Dizdaruša. Much of this work was necessary in the absence of a functioning state or market, as NGOs stepped in to assist in the provision of basic services, under the guidance of the improvised state. Indeed, in Brčko the provision of basic services became a point of leverage over intransigent local politicians as NGOs delayed intervention until security could be guaranteed. In a paper in *Parameters*, the US Army War College Quarterly, Lieutenant Colonel Tony Cucolo explained this process:

Simply opening a dialogue would bring their town [Brčko] great benefits: nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were looking for any sign of moderation from the Serbs before they would commit substantial aid [...]one would think a reliable power grid and new windows and heating oil from aid organizations for their hospital might be good incentives for simply discussing face-to-face local peace initiatives.

(Cucolo, 1999: 110)

This comment not only highlights the post-war role of NGOs in assisting in the provision of utilities and basic services, but it also points to how NGOs became enrolled in the discourses and performances of the wider processes of peace-building. NGOs began to be perceived not simply as conduits for resources, but also as active participants in the network of organisations that were attempting to implement the Dayton Agreement. As immediate post-war humanitarian concerns began to diminish for certain sections of the population, so NGOs shifted their priorities towards objectives of reconciliation and, with direct reference to the

discourse of Dayton, 'democratization'. One NGO worker described how this shift in priorities had effected donor funding, remarking "they used to fund *doing* things now they fund *talking* things"⁴.

A number of authors have attempted to model these shifting NGO priorities as organisations move from humanitarian objectives to more long-term priorities. These changes are reflected in Korten's (1990) 'three generations of voluntary development action'. In this model, Korten outlines three stages or 'generations' of NGO activity from relief work, to capacity building and then finally to the more abstract 'sustainable systems development' where NGOs seek to make changes in policies and institutions at local, national and international levels (Korten, 1990: 118). Korten suggests that a linear path can be traced between NGOs moving from the first through to the third generations of voluntary activity (Korten, 1990: 113-132). While this schema shares some features with the post-war geopolitical discourses in Brčko, Korten's invocation of a teleology divided into distinct consecutive phases does not provide an accurate representation of the practices of the NGOs in the town. Brčko's post-conflict society was one of dislocation, fragmentation and profound inequality, as certain groups managed to capture resources through both legal and illegal means whilst others remained destitute and in need of humanitarian assistance⁵.

The difficulty in identifying distinct phases of NGO activity in Brčko supports Gill's (2000) observation that literature examining economic and social transformations suffers a problem of delineation, as he asks "where does the breakdown end and the transition to democracy begin?" (Gill, 2000: 8). As humanitarian relief in Bosnia has dwindled both in terms of volume and prevalence within the rhetoric of international intervention, a discourse of 'democratization' has emerged. The rhetoric of "*emergency to transition*" is suggestive of the wider move to connect Bosnia to other economic and social transformations taking place in Central and Eastern Europe, through such organisations as the Council of Europe

⁴ Interview with Counterpart Official 'C', Brčko 4th October 2002.

⁵ The wide income disparity within post-conflict Brčko was discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

and the Stability Pact. The implications of this shift in the discourse and rhetoric of development interventions has been profound for the NGOs of Brčko. A representative of Counterpart, an American NGO working in Brčko, alluded to the shifts in temporality and velocity heralded by the change in donor priorities:

I mean, also I think that there is a difference between humanitarian involvement and the longer term community organising and development, because humanitarianism is top down, it is about speed and efficiency. I mean, it is glorified shipping innit!

(Counterpart Official 'A', Brčko, 15th May 2003)

This comment points to the substantive change in NGO work in Brčko, from mitigating the worst consequences of conflict to attending to the longer-term issues of conflict resolution, community development and democratization.

The shift from 'emergency to transition' has, however, involved more than a simple reallocation of NGO tasks from short-term relief distribution towards more long-term objectives. While during conflict their position as external actors capable of intervening dispassionately in the 'bewildering' (Major, 1999: 532) state of affairs was brought to the fore, in the post-war period NGOs were reinscribed as autonomous organisations close to the grassroots capable of stimulating associative life and acting to represent the disadvantaged or marginalised. In this way, a remarkable change has taken place as NGOs, once the frontline of international intervention in Bosnia, are taken to represent 'civil society'. This perceived transition in role also has a clear scalar component, as the benefit of NGOs shifts from their extra-local status, outside of the parochial 'ancient ethnic hatreds', to being explicitly embedded in local communities and thus able to represent particular interests. This re-branding of NGOs can only be understood in the context of wider debates surrounding 'transition', defined as the collection of institutional and societal reforms undertaken to reorganise states to function as market democracies.

5.3.1 Transitions to Democracy

Over the last two decades ‘transition’ has become the most popular label for the set of processes involved in a state moving from authoritarian rule to liberal market democracy. In particular, following the end of the Cold War and the Fall of the Berlin Wall, academic, media and policy scripts have deemed the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to be ‘in transition’. Samuel Huntington (1991) branded these dramatic European events as a ‘third wave of democratization’, following two other phases of democratization from 1828-1926 and 1943-64 (Huntington, 1991). This ‘third wave’ led to triumphal declarations of “the End of History” (Fukuyama, 1992) where liberalism, capitalism and democracy were thought to have scored a final victory over authoritarianism and communism. These claims have since subsided and, even been discredited, with Merrifield (2004) recently suggesting that “[a]nyone with half a brain knew that Fukuyama’s teleology was an apologia for free market capitalism” (Merrifield, 2004: 325). Beyond this teleology, the ‘end of history’ approach also assumed that from the shell of authoritarianism fully functioning democracies spontaneously emerged. In contrast, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and the USSR has been sporadic, contingent and perhaps most importantly, a long-term process.

Recent work examining the events of the ‘third wave of democratization’ has built on these arguments, drawing attention to the ways in which democratic transition has been viewed in reductive terms, ignoring local and temporal differentiations (Bradshaw and Stenning, 2004: 247). These criticisms have been broadened to question the model of democracy that is envisaged within work examining democratic transition. It seems that just as democracy has solidified its “aura of legitimacy” (Held and Archibugi, 1995: 2), so critics have questioned the

unifying ideologies and procedures that underpin this form of social order. As Graham (1986) points out:

[u]p to the eighteenth century everyone had a clear idea of what democracy was and hardly anyone was in favour of it. Now the position is reversed. Everyone is in favour of it but no-one has a clear idea any longer what it is.

(Graham, 1986 quoted in Arblaster, 1999: 34.)

Bastian and Luckham (2003) agree, suggesting that despite the ubiquity of the term contemporary democracy is “Janus-faced”, with the capacity to both “empower citizens, overcome exclusion and contribute to good governance” but often becoming “the tool of powerful economic interests, reinforcing social inequalities, penalizing minorities, awakening dormant conflicts, and failing in practice to broaden popular participation in government” (Bastian and Luckham, 2003: 1). For Bell and Staeheli (2001) this distinction can be thought of in terms of *procedural* and *substantive* democratization, arguing that democratic transition has privileged the procedural (that is, the institutions, rules and practices of governance) over substantive issues of democratic outcomes (such as equity and justice) (Bell and Staeheli, 2001: 178). This distinction opens questions as to the ability of ‘representative’ democracy to deliver equitable outcomes, and in so doing whether such models of democracy have moved beyond eighteenth century conceptions of the term, described by Painter (1999) as “mob rule or tyranny of the crowd” (Painter, 1999: 103; Williams, 1983: 93-98).

The experience of post-conflict Bosnia illustrates the contested nature of discourses of democratization. In the initial post-conflict period democracy was conceived in procedural terms, with the holding of elections taken as a measure of success in the transition to democracy. A number of authors have suggested that this narrow conception of democracy and rapid time scale was a product of US domestic concerns, most notably the Clinton Administration’s desire to be seen to be making

progress in Bosnia during a presidential campaign (Williams, 1996; Donais, 2000). While the 1996 elections predictably entrenched nationalist political rule over the Bosnian territory, international stakeholders, who pointed to the elections as tangible evidence of 'democratization', could still claim 'success'⁶. This discursive tactic reflects Bell and Staeheli's (2000) assertion that the *procedures* of democracy have been promoted at the expense of a more intangible *substantive* democratization. It seems, however, that the initial 'success' of the Bosnian 1996 elections has since been reassessed by Europe and the US, when examined in the context of reformulated geopolitical aims. For example, US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz used a trip to Srebrenica to suggest "the experience of Bosnia shows the danger of rushing to hold elections in post-war Iraq simply as a show of democracy taking root"⁷ (quoted in Shanker, 2003). Paddy Ashdown, the current Bosnian High Representative, is similarly reflective on the success of early elections in Bosnia:

Promoting democracy in Bosnia Herzegovina was the highest priority in the aftermath of the Dayton Agreement. We measured the success of this by the number of elections we could organize. Seven years on, however, citizens [...] have grown weary of voting [...] The focus on elections, meanwhile, slowed our efforts to tackle organized crime and corruption.

(Ashdown, 2003: 17)

The results of the 1996 Bosnian elections did not, however, mark a rethinking of the international democratization strategy. The focus remained on procedural aspects, though more emphasis was placed on establishing the 'correct'

⁶ For claims by international community of the 'success' of the 1996 elections see, for example, High Representative Carl Bildt's speech at Royal United Services Institute, October 1996 (available at www.ohr.int).

⁷ This rhetoric is made all the more surprising as Wolfowitz argued prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom that "there is no history of ethnic strife in Iraq" and thus the country would not demand the same level of post-conflict intervention (quoted in Schmitt, 2003).

institutions and establishing the rule of law⁸. These ambitions hold clear echoes of the World Bank's 'good governance' approach: the employment of 'managerialist' rhetoric to suggest that technical or bureaucratic failings are blocking economic or political reform. As evidence, the nationalist election results in Bosnia were a significant factor in the granting of "Bonn powers"⁹ to the OHR, thereby granting symbolic capital and strengthening their control over the Bosnian territory. Much of the explanation for the election results employed the same 'cultural racism' (Žižek, 2000: 4-5) that had infused the Balkanistic interpretations of the conflict itself. The inability of the Bosnian citizenry to vote for moderate political parties, as opposed to monothematic nationalist groups, was put down to the 'immature' civil society in the country (Belloni, 2001). As a consequence, following the elections the creation and strengthening of civil society became an issue in Bosnia (Chandler, 2000: 144). As with the discourse of 'good governance', questions of weak or immature civil society were entirely subjective and defined only in terms established by the intervening governments and organizations. Another similarity was that the invocation of 'weak civil society' heralded new and more penetrative forms of intervention in Bosnia as "strengthening civil society" became a key aspect of the discourses of intergovernmental agencies and national governments (see OSCE, 2001).

5.3.2 The Importance of Civil Society

The renewed political and academic interest in 'civil society' in the 1990s can be traced to the fall of Communism across Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. The power of dissident and pro-democracy groups to shape the institutions of the state has been portrayed as a victory for 'civil society': the will of the people holding

⁸ Carl Bildt, Paddy Ashdown's predecessor as High Representative, made a number of speeches after the election result calling for stronger common Bosnian institutions and the need for more emphasis on the civilian, as opposed to military, aspects of the peace agreement (see, for example, Bildt, 1996).

⁹ As discussed in Chapter 4, "Bonn powers" (named after the location of the Peace Implementation Conference on December 10th 1997 at which they were granted) allow the High Representative to fire any elected official or pass any law if it is perceived to be in the interests of implementing the Dayton Agreement.

the state to account (Bernhard, 1996: 311; Crook, 2001). This image of civil society as a force of democracy is also prevalent in Bosnia, where a range of international agencies have created policies and programmes to encourage the creation, development or consolidation of civil society (see World Bank, 2004; OSCE, 2003; United Nations, 2003). Civil society has thus entered the discourses of international development agencies, keen to draw on its role of encouraging “genuine spaces of democratic politics” (Isaac, 1996: 293-294). This prioritising of non-state actors echoes the solutions encapsulated by ‘good governance’ initiatives, discussed earlier in the chapter.

However, the popularity of the idea of civil society within the discourses of international agencies and the conviction with which civil society is discussed should not be confused with a universal understanding of the term. As Bratton (1994) suggests “few social and political concepts have travelled so far in their life and changed their meaning so much” (Bratton, 1994: 52). These shifts in the meaning of civil society are not surprising: historically, the term has formed a vital part of the vocabulary of political philosophers as they have considered how people can meet individual needs whilst also achieving collective ends. On account of this historical ubiquity, there are many origins of the term ‘civil society’, and these have been selectively drawn upon to justify and support the image of civil society as a set of non-state organisations in post-conflict Bosnia.

The classical roots of civil society can be found in the work of Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, where the term described the use of rational argument to resolve conflict and achieve a common good. These early models of civil society reflect the uses of civil society as a mechanism for mediating between “[...] selfish goals of individual actors and the need for some basic solidarity” (Hann, 1996: 4). The scholars of the Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith and David Hulme, developed these themes in the Eighteenth Century. These scholars conceived civil society as not only a social or political consideration but also an economic practice, involving the civilised exchange of both ideas and goods. This

raised the question of the role of the state: if economic transactions could be conducted with civility the intervention of the state was seen, particularly by Adam Smith, as unnecessary.

In the Nineteenth Century, Hegel was more circumspect in reducing the role of the state in managing economic and social affairs. Hegel saw civil society as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production which constituted a location of competing class relations, each with little interest in the common good. Consequently, the state was vital in mediating the “egotistical tendencies” of certain elements of civil society (Padgett, 1996: 4). This moral role of the state was later contested by Marx, who felt that the private dimension of civil society overpowered the public aspect which, in a capitalist society, resulted in an overemphasis on the rights of the individual to pursue self-interest (Arato and Cohen, 1995: 142). Despite their differences, these models introduce the notion of civil society as external to the state, potentially holding the state to account. In addition to a philosophical aspiration or a theatre of economic exchange, Marx and Hegel conceived civil society as a focal point of democratic practice. This role was emphasised by Alexis de Tocqueville in *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (Democracy in America) (1835). In this work, de Tocqueville argued that the guarantee of individual liberties was to be found in what he called ‘democratic expedients’ which included local self-government, the separation of the church and the state, a free press, indirect elections, an independent judiciary and, above all, ‘associational life’ (Kaldor, 2003: 19).

These theoretical underpinnings were evident in the rhetoric of international agencies following the 1996 elections in Bosnia in their portrayals of civil society as a democratic prerequisite, separate from the state. The rhetoric of pluralist democracy, coupled with the ideal of the separation of civil society from the state, has continued within the policy scripts of international agencies in Bosnia. For example, the OSCE’s¹⁰ (2003) *Civil Society Policy in Bosnia* begins with the

¹⁰ The OSCE is drawn upon to represent international policy in Bosnia on account of its geographical reach within the country over the post-war period: it has been the international agency with the most field offices within Bosnia (Interview with OSCE Head of Mission, Brčko 17th October 2002).

statement: “[t]he term ‘Civil Society’ describes the space which lies between the government on one hand and families and individuals on the other” (OSCE, 2003: 1). Civil society is thus represented as a space of liberty, a democratic expedient in de Tocquevillian terms, capable of holding the state to account and negotiating individual and collective needs. This representative strategy allows NGOs to be equated with ‘civil society’ on account of their perceived autonomy, coupled with their supposed ability to “pluralize the institutional arena and bring more democratic actors into the political sphere” (Mercer, 2002: 10). The OHR demonstrates a similar conflation of ‘NGOs’ and ‘civil society’ in their published development policy, where they use the two terms interchangeably (see OHR, 2000b). The OSCE (2001) seem to agree, suggesting that NGOs are an “essential part” of civil society:

[t]he presence of a strong civil society is crucial to promote democracy as a mechanism for stimulating public pressure and forcing state institutions into becoming more responsible and accountable. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a fundamental role in the development and consolidation of democratic stability and pluralism. Their work to protect human rights, advocate legislative changes and voice the basic needs of the population makes NGOs an essential part of civil society.

(OSCE, 2001: 3)

The perception of NGOs as a fundamental part of ‘civil society’ has led to the suggestion that their mere presence in post-conflict Bosnia is evidence of democratization (Tvedt, 2002: 364). This line of thinking reflects quantitative ratings of democratization, where the number of NGOs correlates with the level, or ‘depth’, of democracy (Kaldor and Vejvoda, 1997: 77; Fisher, 1998; Mercer, 2002: 10). This approach is reflected in the work of organisations such as Civicus or the Open Society Institute as they attempt to construct “indices of democracy” largely based upon numerical analyses of NGO presence (Anheier, 2004). In this way, the improvised state in Brčko no longer views NGOs as agents of aid delivery, but rather as representatives of democratic participation.

The conflation of NGOs with civil society has led McIlwaine (1999) to suggest that the term has been “hollowed out” as it has become just another term in the lexicon of development agencies (McIlwaine, 1999: 515). Kaldor (1999) agrees, suggesting that this neo-liberal interpretation conceives civil society “not as struggle, but as service delivery” (Kaldor, 1999: 22). Hann (1996) is more critical suggesting that the “reduction [of civil society] by governments and aid agencies to the world of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) represents an impoverished view of social life” (Hann, 1996: 22). Perhaps the most contested aspect of this view of social life is that it suggests that society is divided cleanly between the state one ‘side’ and civil society on the other.

The discussion in the previous chapter began the process of contesting this clean division by heralding the state in Brčko as ‘improvised’ between various agencies and processes. The relationship between the improvised state and NGOs appears far more blurred in Bosnia than the certainty of the discourses of the OHR and OSCE would suggest. The work of Antonio Gramsci is useful in understanding the practices of these improvised state organs as they attempt to shape civil society. Gramsci conceived civil society as an arena in which states and other powerful actors intervene to influence the political agendas of organised groups with the intention of defusing opposition (Hearn, 2001: 43). This represents a dramatic shift from the neoliberal definition of civil society as ‘autonomous’ from the state. This notion is developed by MacDonald (1994) when he notes how Gramsci criticised liberal attempts to draw a clear distinction between state and civil society and insists that the two spheres are integrally connected:

[s]tate power is maintained not only through the formal organisations of ‘political society’ (government, political parties, the military), but also by building hegemony through many of the institutions of civil society such as the church and the media. The attempt of neo-conservatives and liberal-pluralist to distinguish between the state and civil society is therefore misguided.

(MacDonald, 1994: 272).

This critique has recently been explored empirically through the work of Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002), who examines the social reproduction of the state in contemporary Turkey. In the context of a persistent critique of the division between the state and civil society, Navaro-Yashin suggests that those who celebrate a new associational pluralism ‘outside’ the state in Turkey may have confused a changing discourse or technique of state power with an autonomous rise of civil society (Navaro-Yashin, 2002: 132). In this way, Navaro-Yashin suggests that there is no ‘autonomisation’ to be observed, but rather a changing enmeshed relationship (Navaro-Yashin, 2002: 132). These practices also reflect the symbolic capital of the state, capable of legitimising certain non-state activity (as ‘civil society’ or NGOs) whilst legislating against others (branding it ‘illegal’ or ‘uncivil’).

This seems an appropriate starting point for examining the NGOs in Brčko. The notion of an ‘enmeshed’ relationship conveys the blurred lines between (or among) the agencies of the improvised state and the NGOs, as the boundaries seem permeable, often to the point of non-existence. The shift from ‘emergency to transition’ has seen NGOs, previously agents of humanitarian relief, recast as organisations of civil society. This is a remarkable transformation: NGOs are no longer rapid distributors of aid, but rather able to encourage civic participation. NGOs in this context are understood as autonomous from the state, as “observing Assembly meetings”, “public hearings” and “lobbying councillors”¹¹ have become a primary form of political participation (particularly in the absence of an election). The following examination of the NGO survey begins to question this autonomy and highlights the more enmeshed or blurred relationship these organisations exhibit with the improvised state.

5.4 The organisations in Brčko District: the NGO Survey

KV: I think question eleven is stupid.

¹¹ Interview with Ambassador Clarke, the Brčko Supervisor 24th March 2003

AJ: Why?

KV: No one will want to talk to you about problems...¹²

This particularly frustrating exchange occurred as my field assistant Dragana and I walked across the park in the centre of Brčko having completed the first survey with a Youth NGO called 'Vermont'. On the evidence of that first survey she was right, and it also confirmed a latent fear that the NGOs in Brčko were 'over-surveyed'. Indeed, the representative at Vermont had been involved with conducting the survey for the *Omladinska Informativna Agencija* only two months earlier. Surveys had also been carried out by the UNDP when they established a Brčko Local Action Programme (BLAP) in 2001 and also by the International Rescue Committee-funded NGO Resource Centre in 2000. The Project Manager of the NGO Resource centre had warned me at the outset of the fieldwork "they won't want to talk about problems [...] because they will think you could offer some money"¹³.

The regularity of these NGO surveys acted as an immediate indicator of the importance to the improvised state of measuring the quantity of 'civil society organisations' as an indication of the quality of associative life¹⁴. This frequency led to responses for my survey being read off a computer screen, and when it came to question eleven ('what problems have you experienced working in Brčko District?') a debate was provoked as to what would be perceived as the 'right answer'. Finally the Vermont representative settled on 'not enough money', the same answer would be repeated in the majority of responses to question eleven. This speaks to issues of positionality as my role of international researcher was connected to that of a donor and, as such, to the same issues that the NGO Resource Centre experienced with

¹² Taken from a conversation with my research assistant Dragana, 4th October 2002. A copy of the survey (in English) can be found in the thesis Appendix.

¹³ Interview with the former Programme Manager of the NGO Resource Centre, Brčko, 3rd May 2003.

¹⁴ This was given as the reason behind the survey by the *Omladinska Informativna Agencija* (email correspondence on 9th October 2002) and during an interview with the UNDP Programme manger, 18th February 2003.

their survey. In the case of the UNDP survey, they have acted as both surveyor and donor in Brčko, funding specific projects under the umbrella of the BLAP programme. It was perhaps no surprise then that individual NGOs felt the need to cast their organisation in a good light.

However, my NGO survey had important functions beyond reiterating the desire for NGOs to avoid self-criticism. I employed four selection criteria to limit the organisations surveyed: legal registration¹⁵ (though two active organisations that were attempting to register were included); social welfare objectives; non-profit and non-political (in the sense of non-party political) objectives. These criteria served to exclude certain organisations, such as the *Mjesne Zajednice* (MZs or Local Communities), an absence that is discussed in Chapter 6. Despite these exclusions, the survey provided a 'snapshot' of the dynamic NGO sector in Brčko, presenting data on the number of organisations and the areas in which they were working. The completed surveys also gave details of the partner organisations in both the public and private sector. However, the survey's main outcome was that it gave an insight into the blurred, shifting and contested boundaries that divide NGOs from other organisations and agencies. Whether as a consequence of proximity to international organisations, donors, the government organs, political parties or the private sector, the fragile autonomy of NGOs in Brčko District was often portrayed. To understand this fragility requires an outline of the sector itself.

Eighteen organisations were surveyed over October and November 2002. Perhaps unsurprisingly all of these organisations were registered, or had arrived, since 1992. Between 1992 and the declaration of the Final Award in 1999, five NGOs registered to work in Brčko. I should repeat the caveat that this does not mean there were only five organisations working in the area. The number during this period is low due to a number of factors. Firstly, international humanitarian organisations (such as International Rescue Committee, the ICRC, Mercy Corps International and World Vision) registered to work in Sarajevo, if at all, and only

¹⁵ Here I am referring to registration external to Brčko District. Over the course of the fieldwork all of the NGOs were attempting to register at the District level, a process that is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

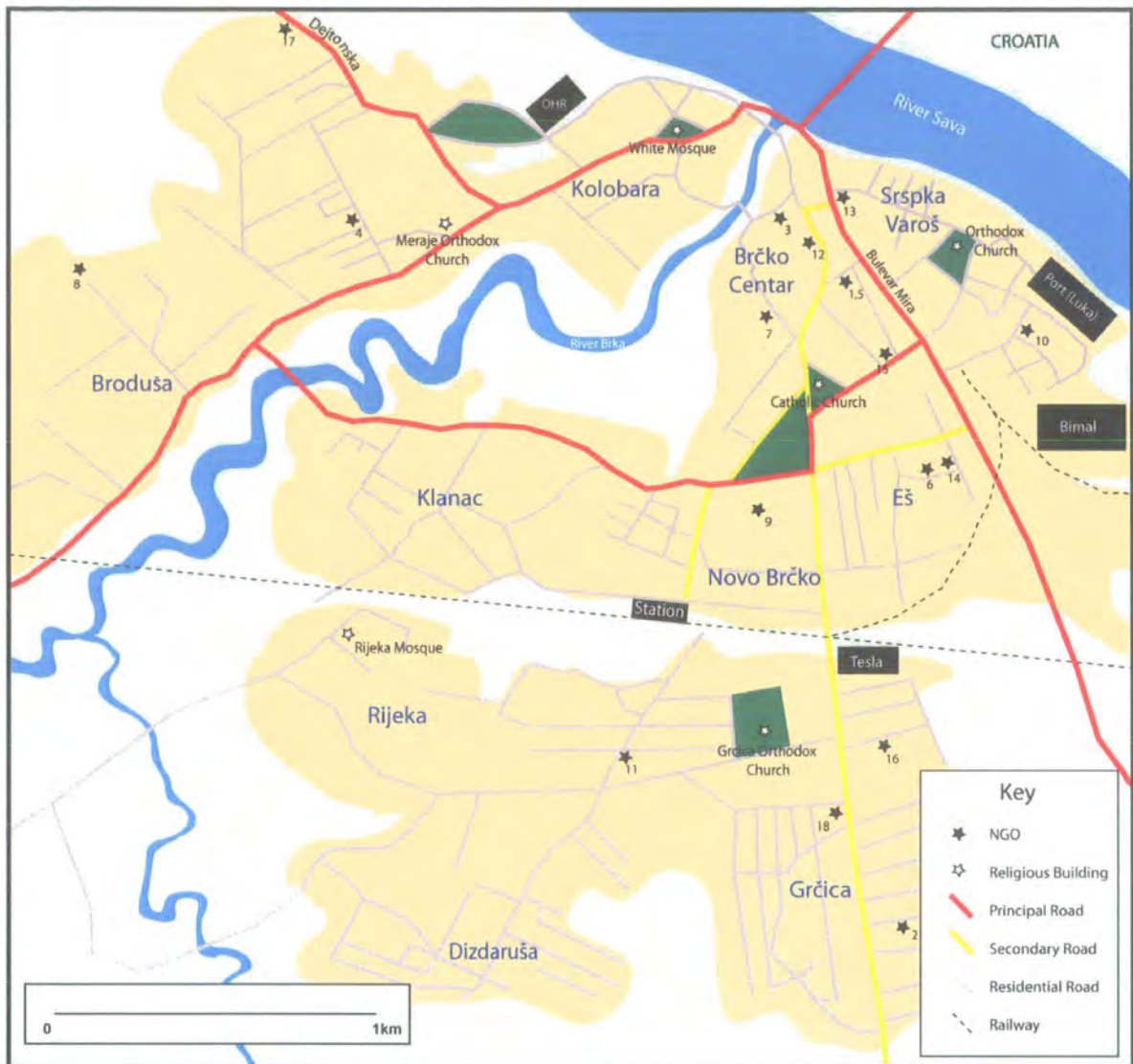
'localised' their branches later in the reconstruction effort. Indeed, many of these humanitarian organisations may have been registered and then subsequently left Brčko (as is the case with the International Rescue Committee) and therefore they are not represented in this 'snapshot' NGO survey. Secondly, many local organisations waited to formally register until the announcement of the arbitration process, and thus the future of the District was more assured. Thirdly, the announcement of the Final Award heralded new donor funds, thus facilitating the emergence of new NGOs in the area (an issue discussed below). On account of these factors, 1999 saw a peak in the number of registrations with eight organisations registering to work in Brčko over the course of the year. Between 2000 and 2003, a further eight organisations either registered or were in the latter stages of the registration process. A chronological assessment of the organisations will add some dynamism to the motivations behind, and the outcomes of, the emergence of NGOs in Brčko District.

5.4.1 NGOs Registered 1992-1998

Organisation	Date of registration	Place of registration	Organisation Aims (taken from the survey)	Map 5.1 Reference Point (see overleaf)
Serb Sisters' Association	1/8/92	Bijeljina	"Goals of humanitarian purpose based on Christian mercy of Serbian Church."	1
Scouts' Union	11/4/95	Bijeljina	"Improve the standard of life for youth."	2
Paraplegics' Association	15/3/97	Bijeljina	"To raise awareness in local community about needs of those people who are handicapped."	3
Bosnijak Women's Association	17/7/97	Tuzla	"Help women: education, material support, health support."	4
Refugees and Displaced Persons Association	1/1/98	Bijeljina	"Our only goal is to resolve problems of the refugee population."	5

Figure 5.1 Brčko NGOs registered between 1992 and 1998

As the table shows, five organisations registered to work in Brčko between 1992 and 1998. The earliest registration date for an NGO is 1st August 1992 (at the court in Bijeljina) by the Serb Sisters' Association. The ethno-national affiliation of this organisation is not surprising considering how Brčko was 'ethnically cleansed' by Serb forces over the spring and summer of that year leaving an exclusively Serb



Map 5.1 Brčko town centre showing the distribution of registered NGOs

(Source: Adapted from Ćirković, 1999)

population in the town. The building in which they met was a Serb cultural stronghold¹⁶ in the centre of town, with seemingly the only permanent member of staff a secretary who sat in an upstairs room in front a six-foot Serbian flag. In the

¹⁶ There are two reasons why this seemed to be the case, above and beyond those listed in the text. The first is that it was in this theatre that my research assistant recited her Serbian epic poetry (which is referred to in Chapter 4). The second is that the large café that occupies the ground floor gives its printed receipts in Cyrillic script, an act of a strongly Serb sympathetic business.

survey, the organization listed their central aims as “cherishing the traditions of the Serbian race” and “making sure that old traditional customs and handicrafts are not forgotten” while following the “humanitarian tradition of Christian mercy of the Serbian Church”¹⁷. The activities of the Serb Sisters’ Association were listed as “visiting the old and infirm” and “organising trips to convents”¹⁸. When I finally managed to attend a meeting, the pictures on the walls of their office were an interesting juxtaposition of Serb cultural imagery (such as St. Sava and St. Cyril) alongside pictures of meetings with past and present District Supervisors. While I expected these two positions to work in antagonism (Serb nationalism and the Dayton oriented OHR), their animosity was reserved only for the District Government with whom they have “very little contact” because “they are not very interested in the work of NGOs”¹⁹. They also said that they felt that “they had been ignored by international donors because of their name”, on account of the fact that “organisations that are not multi-ethnic are not appreciated in Brčko District”²⁰.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects to emerge from the Serb Sisters’ survey was their answer to the question “what linkages do you have with other NGOs and associations?” The first organisation they listed was the Bosnijak Women’s Association, another one of the five organisations that registered between 1992 and 1995. Perhaps conditioned by perpetual discourses of ethnic animosity and subsequent clashes of entrenched nationalism, this was a link I had not expected to be considered most important, indeed, I thought there would be animosity between the two organisations. However, in discussion with the BWA this close tie was reiterated. The Bosnijak Women’s Association seemed to have little in common with the Serb Sisters’ Association. They met in a small nursery school in the heavily reconstructed Broduša district of Brčko and began their work “helping soldiers in the Federation side during the war”²¹. More recently they have worked to “provide

¹⁷ Survey of the Serb Sisters’ Association, Brčko 23rd October 2002.

¹⁸ Survey of the Serb Sisters’ Association, Brčko 23rd October 2002.

¹⁹ Discussion with a representative from the Serb Sisters’ Association, Brčko 23rd October 2002.

²⁰ Survey of the Serb Sisters’ Association, Brčko 23rd October 2002.

²¹ Interview with a representative of the Bosnijak Women’s Association, Brčko 21st February 2003.

equipment for schools” and “move towards a more project based approach”²². Interestingly, the geography of these two organisations reflects the ethno-national division of the District following the conflict: the Serb Sisters’ in the centre of Brčko in a building adorned with Serb flags and Orthodox iconography, the Bosnijak Women’s Association up a gravel track on the periphery of town in what was the Zone of Separation. Following discussions with both the Serb Sisters’ Association and the Bosnijak Women’s Association, coupled with witnessing the organisations at an NGO registration meeting, the reason for their mutual support became clear. It seemed that both the Serb Sisters’ Association and the Bosnijak Women’s Association are both resistant to the notion of multi-ethnic identity, as espoused by other women’s groups such as the Brčko Women’s Round Table. The Serb Sisters’ and the Bosnijak Women seek to support each other in their mutual desire for mono-ethnicity, a situation that reflected Susan Woodward’s contention that there has been “plenty of cooperation among leaders of the three national communities [in Bosnia] to keep the game going” (Woodward, 2001: 12). A perhaps more pernicious example of this collusion of nationalist positions is often discussed in relation to Tudjman and Milošević meeting at Karadjordjevo²³ to agree upon the division of Yugoslavia (Silber and Little, 1995: 131).

Another organisation that registered before 1999 was the Paraplegics’ Association²⁴. This NGO ran a small print shop off the main street in Brčko and sought to finance their organisation through the profits. Their central organisational aim was “trying to get society to help paraplegics”²⁵ through a combination of direct action (material assistance to the mobility impaired and their families) as well as attempting to change government legislation to improve access for those with disabilities. This combination of lobbying activities coupled with (attempted) financial sustainability seemed to suggest that the Paraplegics’ Association reflected the discourses of civil society as espoused by organisations such as the OHR or the

²² Interview with a representative of the Bosnijak Women’s Association, Brčko 21st February 2003

²³ Tito’s favourite hunting villa 125km outside Belgrade (Silber and Little, 1995: 133)

²⁴ The Paraplegics’ Association registered on 15th March 1997 in Bijeljina.

OSCE (2001, above). On this evidence I was, perhaps naïvely, expecting to meet an organisation that was satisfied with its position within the network of Brčko institutions. However, when I went back to the organisation to collect the survey I had an impromptu interview with the manager who appeared extremely agitated by the lack of support from the District Government. The manager showed me into his small office off the printing room. The electricity in Brčko had failed, and as it was an icy December morning we warmed up by drinking sweet Turkish coffee from chipped mugs. He was outraged by the injustice of the District Government, criticising the high taxes for NGOs, the bills and their level of wages saying, “the cleaner gets paid more than the Mayor of Venice!”²⁶ As the final demonstration of government disinterest he remarked that they “had a Basketball tournament and the government would not even come to that!”²⁷ The president felt that these policies were because they [the Government] “want a Western system and fund us only from time to time, not on a regular basis”²⁸. When I asked if they had a permanent representative with the government the president replied:

No, but that is fine, because we don't want to be political - we would rather work with the OHR as they are not political men. We are in good cooperation with the OHR, and its reduction in size will be a problem.

(Interview with the Paraplegics' Association, 9th December 2002)

These comments represent another example of the casting of ‘politics’ as the actions of the District Government, whilst the OHR was perceived as apolitical. Within the interview with the Paraplegics' Association this divide was also constituted as competing ideologies of ‘nationalism’ (the District Government/ ‘politics’) versus ‘multi-ethnicity’ (OHR/ ‘apolitical’). This binary seemed to have

²⁵ Survey of the Paraplegics' Association, 3rd October 2002.

²⁶ Interview with the President of the Paraplegics' Association, 9th December 2002.

²⁷ Interview with the President of the Paraplegics' Association, 9th December 2002.

a number of effects, as NGOs sought to avoid connections to the State (District Government) in favour of forging links with international organisations. In this way, the geopolitical position of international organisations (such as the OHR or OSCE) is masked by discursive 'neutrality'.

The fourth organisation to register before 1999 was surveyed by mistake. My research assistant and I were looking for the Serb Sisters' Association in the area above the theatre in the centre of town; they had not arrived for another weekly meeting. We wandered through to the secretary (with the Serbian flag) in the adjacent room. In the large office sat a group of five men, smoking heavily and drinking *Jelen Pivo*²⁹. They had been there the first time we had visited, though we had thought nothing of it - they were certainly not the Serb Sisters' Association and groups of men sitting around drinking and smoking were not rare in Brčko. However, on this visit the secretary asked why we did not want to survey them. One of the men looked round and agreed: "Yes, why don't you survey us? We are an NGO"³⁰. So we gave them a survey, which was returned later thoroughly completed. They were the Association of Refugees and Displaced Persons and their main aim was "the carrying out of Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement"³¹. Annex 7 relates to displaced persons and refugees stating that "[a]ll refugees and displaced persons have the right freely to return to their homes of origin" (OHR, 2000a: 51). They stated that they have "office problems" and they are currently meeting in the *kafani penzionera* (pensioners' café). They were also keen to state their autonomy, making it clear that they "do not look for donations"³².

The final organisation to register before 1998 was the Scouts Union, registering on 11th April 1995 in Bijeljina. Their responses in the survey were brief, citing that they sought to "improve the standard of life for youth" though their work

²⁸ Interview with the President of the Paraplegics' Association, 9th December 2002.

²⁹ Literally translated 'Deer Beer', a lager brewed outside Belgrade.

³⁰ From field journal 28th September 2002.

³¹ Survey of the Association of Refugees and Displaced Persons, Brčko 4th October 2002.

³² Survey of the Association of Refugees and Displaced Persons, Brčko 4th October 2002.

was hampered by “financial problems”³³. These rather abstract responses gave little impression of the working of this organisation, though their survey did act as an introduction to another international coordination initiative (in addition to the OHR NGO coordination meetings). The leader of the Scouts Union, Vlado Mihajlović, was also the chair of the OSCE sponsored YCB. This perhaps explains why he suggested that the Scouts Union enjoyed cooperation with “all the organisations of Brčko District”³⁴.

A unifying facet of all five organisations that registered before 1999 was a poor relationship with the District Government, variously suggesting that “the government has a negative view of associations”³⁵, “[we have] no cooperation with the government”³⁶ or “the government of Brčko District are not very interested in the work of NGOs”³⁷. Views concerning international organisations were more positive, suggesting that “the EU wants to help us”³⁸, “we have good communication with the OHR and OSCE through projects and seminars”³⁹ and “the OHR appreciates our work”⁴⁰. The international organisations would perhaps respond that this points to their progressive attitude towards NGOs, or a more cynical critique may be that NGOs do not wish to ‘bite the hand that feeds’. While either may be in part true, I would suggest there is a more historically embedded reason for these polarised views. Four out of the five organisations are continuations (or, in some cases ‘reinventions’) of associations that had existed prior to the conflict in Brčko. The only exception is the Association of Refugees and Displaced Persons. These four have experienced a paradigm shift in relations with the government. As Pusić (1975) points out, the Yugoslav government had formerly provided funds for these organisations as part of the constitutional reform of 1974 (Pusić, 1975: 138). This

³³ Survey of the Scouts Union Brčko 15th October 2002.

³⁴ Survey of the Scouts Union, Brčko 15th October 2002.

³⁵ Survey of the Association of Refugees and Displaced Persons, Brčko 4th October 2002.

³⁶ Survey of the Paraplegics’ Association, Brčko 3rd October 2002.

³⁷ Survey of the Serb Sisters’ Association, Brčko 23rd October 2002.

³⁸ Survey of the Paraplegics’ Association, Brčko 3rd October 2002.

³⁹ Interview with a representative of the Bosniak Women’s Association, Brčko 21st February 2003.

⁴⁰ Survey of the Serb Sisters’ Association, Brčko 23rd October 2002.

initiative was part of expanding worker self-management and devolution of centralised power. Certain government competencies, such as taxation and analysing infrastructural need, were devolved to *Mjesne Zajednice* ('Local Communities') though social and cultural welfare issues were encouraged through specific associations and including the, already established, Scouts (or 'Young Pioneers' as they were known).

Brčko District Government has, however, been designed on a "western system", as the Paraplegics' Association termed it. This approach has heralded a new era of the neo-liberal 'small government' approach, reflected in the discourse of privatisation and advocated by advisors such as the District Management Team, where little finance is left within the District Government for these 'low priority' or 'soft' social cultural welfare organisations. As such, the District Government is perceived by these associations to be 'failing' in its responsibilities, when in fact it is 'succeeding', only the criteria of success have changed. The consequence of this altered institutional commitment from the District Government to the associations is, as these five organisations varyingly attest, the reconfiguration of institutional relations where intergovernmental organisations (such as the OHR, OSCE or EU) are perceived as providing vital funding and support. In this way, local networks of support and regulation are sidelined by these re-emergent NGOs (or reconfigured associations), in preference for transnational organisations who appear to be more supportive of their objectives. While autonomy from the state is lauded as a quality of civil society, these NGOs seem to be forming closer ties with the *improvised* state, while losing trust in the capabilities of the District Government. This process has assisted in reifying the notion of NGOs as 'foreign organisations' operating in Brčko. The consequences of this labelling will be explored through an examination of NGOs that emerged following the declaration of the Final Award.

5.4.2 NGOs Registered 1999-2003

Organisation	Date of registration	Place of registration	Organisation Aims (taken from the survey)	Map 5.1 Reference Point
Firefly Youth Project	12/3/99	Bijeljina	"Reconciliation between different ethnic groups through various activities."	6
Proni	29/5/99	Bijeljina	"Promote cooperation and communication between people of all backgrounds and to foster people to take their own initiative."	7
Lace Roma	1/6/99	Bijeljina	"Help the homeless. Try and improve utilities like water, roads, lighting, and telephones."	8
Vermont Youth Association	9/6/99	Bijeljina	"Improvement of young people's situation, protection and promotion of rights of children and youth."	9
Centre for Information and Legal Help	26/6/99	Bijeljina	"Creating conditions for respecting people's rights in accordance with international conventions."	10
Serbian Youth Association	8/7/99	Bijeljina	"Development of cultural and spiritual identity."	11
BUM (Brcanska Udruga Mladih)	1/8/99	Orasje	"Improving the conditions for youth in Brčko."	12
Women's Round Table	31/12/99	Bijeljina	"Strengthening peace and trust amongst people, strengthening the economic position of women in society and the protection of women."	13
EKO (Ekolosko Udruzenje Mladih)	13/4/00	Bijeljina	"Organising courses on ecological issues and preserving man's [sic] environment in order to raise awareness of its significance"	14
EKI Micro Credit	1/7/00	Bijeljina	"Providing micro credit to farmers and small businesses in Brčko District."	15
St. Sava's Youth Association	21/10/02	Brčko	"Cherishing national, cultural and spiritual identity."	16
Anti-Terrorist Organisation 'Baza'	In Process	Brčko	"Reduce terrorism in every way."	17
Youth Association Grcica	In Process	Brčko	"Education of young people in Brčko DC in area of drugs, aids, prostitution, criminal, domestic violence."	18

Figure 5.2 Brčko NGOs registered between 1999 and 2003

Similar to the organisations registered from 1992 to 1998, those that registered from 1999 to 2003 seemed to be struggling to play to role of ‘civil society’. Following the signing of the Final Award there was an increase in donor funding to Brčko. Not only was the future of the District now more certain, but also the multi-ethnic outcome was approved of by many donors (ICG, 2003: i). American donor organisations such as USAID or USDA favoured Brčko on account of the American District Supervisor retaining close control over District Government decision-making (ICG, 2003: 28). In addition, the close administration of economic reform by groups such as Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) and PADCO⁴¹ acted to allay the fears of donors over potential corruption. As evidence of this changing donor climate, in September 2000 the UNDP announced a two-year Brčko Local Action Programme (BLAP) with a budget of just under \$1.9 million dollars, which included a \$278 000 fund earmarked for ‘community development’ to which NGOs could apply (UNDP, 2001: 31). Brčko was chosen as a site for such a regional development programme (there are only four such sites in Bosnia⁴²) on account of its “multi-ethnic” character and the reconstruction necessary following the conflict⁴³. In another example of the shifting donor climate in Brčko, the German government development agency GTZ (*Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*) began investigating potential funding strategies in Brčko for youth NGOs in January 2001. This initiative led to the establishment of the Local Youth Council (*Lokal Omladinski Vlada*) and, in conjunction with the District Government and an international youth NGO, the building of a youth centre in Brčko.

By drawing on two case-study NGOs that registered in this period the effects of the shift from ‘emergency’ to ‘transition’ begin to come to light. Firefly Youth Project and Proni were the first two organisations to register following the Final Award, though these organisations had both been working in Brčko before

⁴¹ Like DAI, PADCO (Planning and Development Collaborative International) is a Washington based development consultancy firm. They took over the USAID contract for the District Management Group in 2002.

⁴² The other UNDP Area Based Development (ABD) projects in Bosnia are located in Posavina, Srebrenica, and the central Bosnian canton (UNDP, 2004).

⁴³ Interview with UNDP BLAP Programme Manager, Brčko 18th February 2003.

completing their formal registration. These organisations were both working in the field of youth reconciliation and though they had not worked within the humanitarian relief effort during the conflict, they felt the effects of public attitudes towards NGOs. In particular, they felt that NGOs were perceived by the Brčko public as 'international' and providing good employment opportunities. In addition they felt that the title 'NGO' served to recast political engagement away from working with the District Government and towards the international agencies within the improvised state.

Firefly Youth Project is an inter-ethnic reconciliation NGO that worked out of an office in central Brčko as well conducting outreach workshops in the suburbs of Broduša, Dizdaruša and schools in central Brčko. Firefly was established by a student from Edinburgh University who had worked in *Mladi Most* ('Youth Bridge') a similar NGO in Mostar. When she explained how she chose Brčko as the location for an NGO she alluded to the nexus between media attention and humanitarian action, an issue discussed earlier in the chapter. She felt that the spotlight had been placed on certain 'talismanic' areas of Bosnia in the media, which had consequently attracted the greatest NGO attention:

Where I was working in Mostar before there were hundreds of organisations working with young people - so it actually started to feel irrelevant - there wasn't any point to doing anything more in Mostar. But in Brčko, even if you did something and it didn't work out, at least you would be doing something that no one else was doing so you wouldn't be in competition with other groups.

(Representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 15th September 2002)

While international donors and NGOs ignored Brčko in the immediate post-war period, the Firefly representative remarked on the shift in attention following the declaration of 'District Status' following the Final Award. In acknowledging that this funding had provided opportunities for greater NGO action, she also speculated on possible negative aspects to this new donor environment:

Back in the good old days when Brčko was ignored there was this thing early on that there were only a few organisations working here and no one had very much money people did club together a lot more - like Proni and Firefly - and all these groups shared resources and made a real effort to work together. [...] I think there has been too much money pumped into Brčko indiscriminately as a result of it becoming a District. Having said that people I know say Brčko is really amazing because it is a place that has become multiethnic following the conflict at an institutional level, at every level.

(Representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 15th September 2002)

From 1997 to 2003, Firefly has run projects in theatre skills, art, English language, photography, Roma education and magazine production. It has also organised summer camps on the Croatian coast for children from Brčko and coordinated a summer arts festival in Brčko town. In the survey, Firefly representatives said that they did not have formal contacts with any other NGOs, and that they only had contact with the District Government “if we need permission for something, we don't ask for money”⁴⁴. They did not find the OHR, or other international organisations, very useful to their work because they felt that “no one listens any more [...] quick changeover of staff [in the OHR] means that you are constantly introducing yourself”⁴⁵. These responses point to a new chronological understanding of NGO work in Brčko. For the Firefly representatives the declaration of the Final Award, and its associated improved funding opportunities, had disrupted a previously charismatic working environment. The increased funding opportunities had reportedly bureaucratised the skills required to carry out work and had led to a struggle between individuals and organisations to gain funding and legitimacy.

As detailed in Chapter 2, I had worked as a UK coordinator for Firefly 1999-2000 and my job had been to help implement the first year of a three-year Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Trust Fund (DPWMTF) grant. When the grant proposal had been written, the arbitration process in Brčko had yet to be resolved,

⁴⁴ Survey of Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 16th September 2002.

⁴⁵ Survey of Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 16th September 2002.

though a central aspect of the rationale for the funding was the ‘unique’ facet of Brčko as ‘a contested area of Bosnia’⁴⁶. The grant was directed towards localising the organisation, leaving a smaller, but self-sustainable, operation carrying out activities and workshops for young people from all ethnic backgrounds. This grant period, lasting from September 1999 to September 2002, was concluding at the start of the fieldwork in Brčko. The organisation continued to rely on money sent from the UK for its core costs (the rent of the building and the wages for the two full-time members of staff), though it had managed to gain some revenue through charging for English language lessons. According to the Project Manager, one of the central difficulties in localising the organisation lay with the attitudes of potential ‘volunteers’ who demanded high wages for working for an ‘international’ NGO. She felt that this was a problem that had been inherited from the role of international organisations:

There is a problem and the International Organisations [IOs], it is their fault. When they came [to Brčko] they offered so much to young people, free trips, seminars, people in NGOs and IOs they gave them money for projects and they taught them how to steal money. The truth is that so many projects [pause] you know when you get money for projects then you always give receipts for the money, it is sad but it happens a lot and it happened in Firefly. And they had good wages. And now, when there is not so much money, there is not so much donors, young people don't want to work for small money. They don't want to work for free and that is not an option. Or they don't want to work at all. But if they want to work the first question they will ask is “how much money will I get?” Not first question “how can I help?”.

(Programme Manager Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 27th March 2003)

These experiences were echoed by Proni, the second organisation to register in 1999. Like Firefly, Proni specialised in youth reconciliation work, though the organisation was much larger with offices across the Former Yugoslavia. I had experience of this NGO outside the research process, through both my work with

⁴⁶ Comments taken from the ‘background’ section of the Firefly Grant proposal to the DPWMTF, written in early 1999.

Firefly (with whom Proni collaborates, in particular through the Local Youth Council) and as Proni provided language tuition over the course of the fieldwork. The organisation arrived in Brčko in late 1998 (though registered formerly in May 1999) and drawing on expertise gained from working in Croatia and Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro) it established its first field centres in Bosnia in Gornji Rahić and Brčko town (see Map 5.1). By splitting their activities between two offices on either side of the inter-entity boundary line, Proni was one of the first organisations to be carrying out cross-border work in Brčko following the conflict⁴⁷. However, in 2001 the two Proni offices merged and the organisation opened a new joint youth centre in Brčko town. This move reflected the improved freedom of movement in Brčko District that followed the declaration of the Final Award, as Bosniak and Croat staff and benefactors were considered safe to travel into central Brčko to attend the NGO. At the time of the survey Proni had core funding from the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)⁴⁸, and this paid for seven fulltime members of staff, three vehicles, and a large office and youth centre in central Brčko. Their main aim was listed as “to encourage personal development through social education”⁴⁹, and this was achieved through accredited higher education courses, exchange visits abroad, the running of a youth centre in Brčko (with plans to open others in villages across the District) and mine and drug awareness projects⁵⁰.

Proni shared Firefly’s objective of localising their operation in Brčko. Registering the organisation in Bijeljina comprised the first part of this strategy, as the control over the management of the project gradually shifted from Sweden to staff in Brčko. Despite this process, which was ongoing at the time of the fieldwork, the organisation was still overseen by frequent visits from the Belgrade-based

⁴⁷ A number of organisations claimed to be the ‘first NGO to carry out cross border reconciliation work in Brčko’ over the course of the fieldwork. Through an examination of Proni evaluation reports and personal testimonies it seems that this organisation has a strong claim to the title (see Hugo, 2001).

⁴⁸ They also applied for individual project funding to other donors, for example their mine awareness project was funded by the Japanese Embassy in Sarajevo.

⁴⁹ Survey with Proni, Brčko 19th November 2003.

⁵⁰ Survey with Proni, Brčko 19th November 2003.

Regional Coordinator who had the responsibility to supervise all the Proni projects in Bosnia and half of Serbia and Montenegro. It was during an interview with the Regional Coordinator, surrounded by scouting tents in an upstairs room of the Proni youth centre, that she discussed the problems that a well-funded international NGO faced when attempting to 'localise' and be accepted by local NGOs:

AJ: What has it been like working in Brčko as an international organisation alongside local organisations?

ML: That is such a big problem. Well, I should say, I perceived it as such a big problem and people said it to me all the time. But the interesting thing is that now the organisation is registered locally, we have a local project manager and when you are here you will very rarely see any international presence [...] there are not so many internationals coming to the project and, other than me, working. But still Isadora [the local project coordinator] was getting really strong rejection and then when we asked people it was because 'Oh, you have got money, all the rest of us are struggling'. So all along it was about having money, and people really resented the fact that the organisation had money.

(extract from interview with Proni Regional Coordinator, Brčko 7th May 2003)

The experiences of Proni and Firefly point to the difficulties faced by NGOs in Brčko as their role during the conflict has acted as a barrier to effective 'localisation'. Rather than acting as foci for civic participation, as the discourses of civil society may indicate, the NGOs could not become embedded in local networks as they were conceived as 'new', 'international' and 'wealthy'. These characteristics served to impede these NGOs' ability to recruit volunteers, which according to the UNDP a key facet of developing associational life:

volunteering plays a significant part in the welfare and progress of industrialised countries and is the basis of much of the activity of non-governmental organisations...By focussing on voluntary behaviour, the international community has an opportunity to reinforce the means and capacities of people from all parts of society to engage in civic activities to benefit their nations, their communities and themselves.

(UNDP, 1999: 2-3)

This volunteerism was not evident in Brčko. Working in an NGO in Brčko was viewed as one of the best employment opportunities outside the government. While academic and policy texts are often keen to show how NGOs are staffed by voluntary workers, the case in Brčko was one of struggles between skilled individuals to gain employment in these organisations. Rather than a voluntarism outlook, lucrative employment was often seen as a defining feature of NGOs in Brčko:

[i]f I say to someone I am working in an NGO, if I say only that...I didn't say it was an international NGO, they just say 'Ooh you have good salary' How do you know that? And they say "well, everyone who is in that kind of organisation have good salaries". Well maybe I don't "no, no, no, you can earn as much as you want". So that is the opinion of all people: that people who are in NGOs want to earn money, not to help people.

(Counterpart Official 'B', Brčko, 22nd May 2003)

The head of the OSCE mission in Brčko supported this view, suggesting that "the NGO sector has been founded by external means [...] so for local people it has been a new phenomenon and it has been greeted with a lot of suspicion"⁵¹. This novelty was reflected in the comments from the Proni Regional Coordinator, as she

⁵¹ Interview with OSCE Head of Mission, Brčko 17th October 2002.

felt that the term 'NGO' was not helping the organisations to forge connections with other organisations and the District Government:

We were really interested in doing some work that was kind of 'let's just get the message out there as to what the role of an NGO is'. Because I got the feeling that it is a word that has been adopted, an English word that has been adopted, in the same way as we use 'social education', which means either: you don't have to turn up, because when it is translated into local language it has the impression that it is informal so that if you don't turn up it doesn't matter, or else it means it is completely against the principals of learning, so I was like we need to find new words to actually describe what we are doing. And I was saying to her this 'NGO' has been adopted as a title but 'non governmental organisation' is not a concept that exists and maybe we should have been looking back to the communist system and the words that were used under the Communist system because at least they have some recognition in the minds of people.

(Prni Regional Coordinator, Brčko 7th May 2003)

According to a Prni project officer, this novelty of NGOs was limiting their political engagement. He remarked that the term 'NGO' sounded "strange, like anti-government organisation"⁵². He suspected that this influences the government's attitude towards NGOs: "they [the government] think it [NGOs] is something against the country, against the government"⁵³. On account of this 'anti-governmental' emphasis, 'politics' was recast by the NGO workers interviewed as the activities of the government (as opposed to political parties) and thus 'being political' was defined as working in conjunction with the government. This echoes the attitude of the Paraplegics' Association, when they discussed the competing ideologies of 'nationalism' (the District Government/ 'politics') versus 'multi-ethnicity' (OHR/ 'apolitical'). This point was further illustrated during the dissemination event in Brčko, after a suggestion that part of being an NGO was being non-political. One NGO member said that he knew an NGO in Croatia that helped with election

⁵² Interview with Prni Project Officer, Brčko 22nd April 2003.

⁵³ Interview with Prni Project Officer, Brčko 22nd April 2003.

monitoring, remarking “how much more political can you get?!”⁵⁴ Interestingly, the notion that NGOs should set themselves at a distance from the functioning of the District Government in order to retain a non-political status acts in direct contradiction to the desire of the Supervisor who, in casting democracy as transparency of the agencies of government, perceived that effective NGOs should be monitoring the decision making processes.

The experiences of Firefly and Proni undermine Korten’s (1990) ‘three generations of NGO activity’, a model that in its failure to take into account public or institutional memory does not represent the experiences of the NGOs in Brčko. The notion of NGOs as “wealthy and external” is a sharp contrast to policy prescriptions casting them as agents of civil society. It is difficult to think of a place for lucrative employment opportunities within the assertion that NGOs are acting as voluntary spaces of civic participation and political engagement. Instead, this process of transformation highlights how the term ‘NGO’ has ‘travelled’ (Said, 1983: 226) from its position within the discourses of intergovernmental organisations to its use in post-conflict Brčko. While theorists and policy makers have sought to link NGOs to civil society, the origins of NGOs in Brčko appear to provoke different connotations. Rather than suggesting an autonomous sphere of citizen activity, keen to represent the marginalised and voice basic needs, the term NGO evokes an image of wealth and international connection. The evidence from the case studies of Firefly and Proni demonstrate how the NGOs in Brčko have struggled with this image of financial security as it has acted as a barrier to volunteerism while redefining what it was to ‘be political’.

5.5 Conclusion

The effects of the geopolitical framing of Bosnia as a ‘humanitarian disaster’ continue to be felt on the local scale in post-conflict Brčko District. The humanitarian effort established NGOs in Bosnia as well-financed, internationally

⁵⁴ Comment from NGO worker at the Fieldwork Dissemination Event, Brčko 20th March 2003.

connected organisations. In the post-conflict period, these international artefacts have been re-branded by the District Supervisor as evidence of a fledgling civil society, a set of organisations which can hold the Brčko District Government to account through the transparent performances of democracy. This representative strategy has created a paradox: while NGOs are perceived as acting as civil society, embedded in local social networks and acting as loci of civic participation, their history and transnational connections ensure that they are perceived by Brčko citizens as wealthy and international. This paradox challenges the teleological narratives charting NGO evolution as suggested by Korten (1990). The situation in Brčko is more blurred and nuanced than these models as public and institutional memory continues to reproduce NGOs as international organisations.

This paradox also draws attention to the contested nature of the division between the state and civil society. The NGOs surveyed in Brčko were not “holding the state to account”, but rather saw the District Government as unhelpful and ineffective while attempting to forge closer links with the agencies of the improvised state. By moving away from conceiving of the state as an identifiable institution and exposing its improvised nature in Brčko, the state/civil society binary becomes blurred. The NGOs saw relationships with international organisations as assisting institutional survival through funding and other forms of assistance. It is these processes through which NGOs are valued, reproduced and rendered visible that will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Gentrifying civil society:

The dual paradox of NGOs in Brčko District

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses a dual paradox within the NGO sector in post-conflict Brčko District. In the last chapter, the shifting role of NGOs in Bosnia was examined, as they moved from actors within an international humanitarian effort during the conflict, to representatives of ‘civil society’ in the post-conflict period. By drawing on material from the NGO survey, it was argued that this transition has resulted in NGOs being perceived by the Brčko public and the organisations themselves as wealthy and international, while donors and the OHR have cast NGOs as locally embedded and representing the Brčko grassroots as agents of civil society. This chapter will expand on this ‘snapshot’ by engaging with more qualitative and

ethnographic field material in an attempt to examine the causes of this first paradox. Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1989, 1990), I will argue that NGOs represent ‘gentrified’ civil society. Building on the common conception of civil society as a *space* between the family and the state or the state and the market, the metaphor of gentrification highlights the accumulation and circulation of particular forms of capital in the organisations of civil society. By viewing gentrification in these terms, the process is conceived less as merely economic, and more as a cultural process, governed by economic considerations with political consequences. This process of social gentrification thus ensures that certain organisations are reproduced and made visible within economic and social reform following the conflict in Brčko, while other organisations are rendered ‘invisible’. The second part of the dual paradox stems from this invisibility. While organisations such as the former Yugoslav *Mjesne Zajednice* (Local Communities) are acting as key outlets of civic participation and representation in practice, they do not correspond with the symbolic values of civil society as prescribed by the District Government and OHR. Consequently such ‘ungentrified’ organisations have been marginalised in terms of donor funding and have been ignored in formal processes of NGO coordination.

This assessment of the dual paradox of the NGO sector in Brčko allows a number of tentative conclusions to be drawn. The first involves the measures of success that are applied to NGOs in Brčko. The analysis in this thesis suggests that the valorization of NGOs is an activity carried out by the OHR in conjunction with other international actors, as they specify the particular exchange values of the reserves of cultural, social and economic capital held by the NGOs. The second conclusion is that any study of NGOs in post-conflict environments must look beyond the gentrified institutional architecture and examine what other organisations are active although written-out of formal policy scripts and processes of international intervention. This, in turn, leads to a third argument, that by adopting the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu, a flexible approach to the social production of NGOs can be developed, one that is attuned to the compromises, improvisations and adaptations that shape the role of civil society in post-conflict environments.

6.2 Gentrification as Capital Accumulation

Within geographical literature, gentrification is most commonly used to explain the process of capital accumulation in particular locations within the urban landscape (Lees 2000; Redfern, 2003; Philips, 2004). In drawing on the metaphor of gentrification, this chapter retains a focus on capital accumulation, though examines this process in the context of the social landscape. Using Bourdieu's (1984) notion of social and cultural capital, this metaphor helps describe how NGOs represent 'gentrified civil society', wealthy in terms of social and cultural resources, while other associations that lack capital remain 'ungentrified'.

For Bourdieu, the economic metaphor of capital highlights "the struggle (or competition) for scarce goods for which the universe is the site" (Bourdieu, 1987: 3). He continues:

[The] [...] fundamental social powers are, according to my empirical observations, firstly *economic capital*, in its various kinds; secondly *cultural capital* [...], again in its various kinds and thirdly two forms of capital that are very strongly correlated, *social capital*, which consists of resources based on connections and group membership, and *symbolic capital*, which is the form the different forms of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate.

(Bourdieu, 1987: 3-4 original emphasis)

One of Bourdieu's key insights was that each form of capital could be converted into other forms (Painter, 2000: 244), though with varying degrees of difficulty (Calhoun, 1993: 69). Bourdieu conceived symbolic capital as the most influential as "it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition" (Bourdieu, 1989: 23). Crucially, a key aspect of this power is control over other forms of capital, managing their conversion and exchange rates (Engler, 2003: 449). As discussed in Chapter 4, this type of capital has been referred to as 'statist capital', as it is the state that has the legitimacy to

confer value on certain activities, whilst devaluing others (Engler, 2003). By viewing social and political practices in terms of capital privileges neither structure nor agency: individuals can exercise their agency, but are still constrained (or enabled) by their reserves of social, cultural and economic capital (Bridge, 2001).

This concept of a 'soft-structure' permeates the work of Bourdieu, as he attempts to construct a theory of practice that overcomes the theoretical oppositions between binaries such as subjectivism and objectivism; particularism and universalism, and agency and structure. Central to this objective are Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* and *field*. Bourdieu describes *habitus* as "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices" (Bourdieu, 1979: 11). For Painter (2000) this makes *habitus* a "mediating link between objective social structures and individual action and refers to the embodiment in individual actors of a system of norms, understandings and patterns of behaviour, which, while not wholly determining action [...] do ensure that individuals are more disposed to act in some ways rather than others" (Painter, 2000: 242). What appears critical is that *habitus* functions *below* the level of consciousness and language, "beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by will" (Bourdieu, 1984: 466). In this way, *habitus* has been understood as both "the social inscribed on the body of the individual" (Cresswell, 2002: 381) and "the regulated source of improvisations" (Calhoun, 1993: 78). In addition, Engler (2003) points to the reflexivity of *habitus* as it is both "structured by, and structuring, each individual social position" (Engler, 2003: 450).

In contrast to the embodied and tacit nature of *habitus*, Bourdieu's notion of *field* is a more grounded conceptual tool. Bourdieu sees the social world as divided into a series of *fields*, each of which constituted a site of a struggle over a particular form of capital (Harker, 1990: 97). As Painter (2000) points out, this concept mediates Bourdieu's other theoretical devices as individual actors bring to the *field* both the embodied disposition of the *habitus* and their stocks of accumulated capital (Painter, 2000: 245). As with *habitus*, Bourdieu was keen to demonstrate that each *field* was dynamic, as struggles are not only over forms of capital but also over the power to define the *field* itself (Postone *et al.*, 1993: 6). The actions of individuals

within the *field* are guided by 'strategy', which again breaks with subjectivist and objectivist thinking in viewing decision making as neither conscious, nor calculated, nor mechanically determined (Mahar *et al.*, 1990: 17). Instead, strategy is the intuitive product of "a practical sense of a particular social game" (Cresswell, 2002: 380). This rhetoric of 'feel for the game' has drawn similarities in some quarters between Bourdieu's notion of strategy and rational actor theory (RAT) (Painter, 2000: 245; Bridge, 2001: 209). Bourdieu, however, rejects RAT as part of a wider aversion to subjectivism (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 118). RAT is dismissed as an overly economic approach to life, without an appreciation of how actors are disposed to make certain decisions to maximize capital while guided by the logic of the *habitus*.

Rather than reducing the causes of gentrification to simply structure or agency, the deployment of Bourdieu's concepts of capital, *field* and *habitus* invoke the complex patterns of power that interact to gentrify civil society. In particular, two interlinked *fields* can be identified in Brčko that act as arenas for struggles over capital. The first of these *fields* is the relationship between donors and NGOs. As a consequence of the funding situation in Brčko, a select group of gentrified organisations, wealthy in social and cultural capital terms, have emerged in the post-conflict period as recognised representatives of civil society. This process is described in terms of 'autonomisation' and 'homogenisation'. While autonomy is often embraced as a positive characteristic of civil society, the *field* of donor funding autonomises the organisations from *each other*, while binding them in closer relationships with institutions of authority. Furthermore, through the system of funding the gentrified NGOs are homogenised into a uniform 'cultural community' exhibiting shared cultural and behavioural traits¹.

The second *field* is formed by the regulation of civil society by agencies of the state. This process has compounded the role of donors by valorizing particular traits as representative of civil society and bureaucratising these through legislation. While this could be interpreted as the impact of structure on the agency of NGOs, the ethnographic material from Brčko describes how this process is mutually

¹ This conception of *habitus* is drawn from Podmore's (1998) insights concerning loft living in Montreal.

constituted between the state and the NGOs as they operate to enable gentrification of selected organisations exhibiting specific traits. The final section of the chapter explores those organisations of civil society that have not gentrified, either as they lack capital or because they are unclassifiable within the symbolic landscape of international intervention. Paradoxically, it is these agencies which continue to act as loci of civil participation, outside the gentrifying gaze of official discourses and practices of international intervention in post-conflict Brčko.

6.3 Donors Demands

The first of the two *fields* that will be considered in this chapter is that of the relationship between NGOs and donors. With the increased popularity of NGOs as agents of international development has come an associated academic literature examining the role of donors in shaping NGO agendas. Recent scholarship has examined the strategies through which donors “set the agenda” (Mawdsley *et al.*, 2002) or the situations in which the relationship between donors and NGOs can become “too close for comfort” (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). In this respect, questions of conditionality have been raised as donor priorities have been seen by some to take precedent over needs emerging from the NGOs themselves or their constituent communities (Boyce, 2002; Evans-Kent, 2002; Evans-Kent and Bleiker, 2003). In addition to shaping the activities of NGOs, a number of authors have focused on the ‘unintended outcomes’ of donor relationships on patterns of governance. In particular, this work has suggested that funding relationships have spread bureaucratic state power in the developing world, as NGOs are enrolled as instruments of neo-liberal governmentality (Ferguson, 1992; Bryant, 2002). These claims have, however, attracted criticism as authors suggest that such perspectives divert attention from the complexity of development policy as institutional practice (Mosse, 2003:45). Mosse (2003) continues:

Policy goals and their project instruments never encode a unity of interests. They are the result of complex negotiations over meaning, and as such are very much part of the wider social life and politics of development organisations that need to be explored ethnographically. [...] [T]here is a need to pay more attention to the development projects, organisations and professionals which frame and control policy ideas.

(Mosse, 2003: 45)

There have been ethnographic attempts to engage with the relationship between donors and NGOs. Through an illuminating case-study of donor projects in Indonesia, Tania Murray Li (1999) draws on the notion of ‘compromise’ to point to the necessity of exploring the ways in which meanings and outcomes are negotiated between donors and NGOs, while at the same time acknowledging that they operate within an uneven field of power (Murray Li, 1999: 297). Howell (2000) employs a similar approach in an examination of the role of donors in shaping NGOs in China. She suggests that instead of clear needs assessments it is issues of “charisma, command of the English language, social ease with westerners and class” which have all been important influences on donor choice of partner NGOs and individuals (Howell, 2000: 12). In the case of Brčko both notions of compromise and the influence of particular cultural traits can be explored through an examination of the circulation and struggle over social and cultural capital.

By way of an overview, the funding strategies of the NGOs in Brčko were extremely diverse. As shown in Figure 6.1 (overleaf), of the eighteen NGOs surveyed, eleven were funded by international organisations, two were funded by agencies within Brčko and five were self- or un-funded. Of the eleven organisations funded by international agencies, four had received project funding from the EU, while the remaining seven had received money from the UNDP, the Swedish International Development Agency, the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Trust Fund, Word Vision, the Japanese Embassy, Mercy Corps and the United States Department of Agriculture. In addition to the different donor organisations, the scale of funding commitments also varied, with one-off project funding for all four EU

grants and the grants from the Japanese Embassy and the UNDP. The five remaining organisations were all funding relationships of three-years or more, as they constituted local branches of international organisations or, as with the case of the Mercy Corps funded organisation, they were a field office that had recently ‘localised’ though retained financial links to their head office. The two locally funded organisations were both Serb youth organisations (St. Sava’s Youth Association and the Serbian Youth Association) and both received donations from the RS Ministry for Sport and Youth, which retained an office in the centre of Brčko. The organisations that were classified ‘self- or un-funded’ functioned solely through voluntary staff or through undisclosed donations from their membership base.

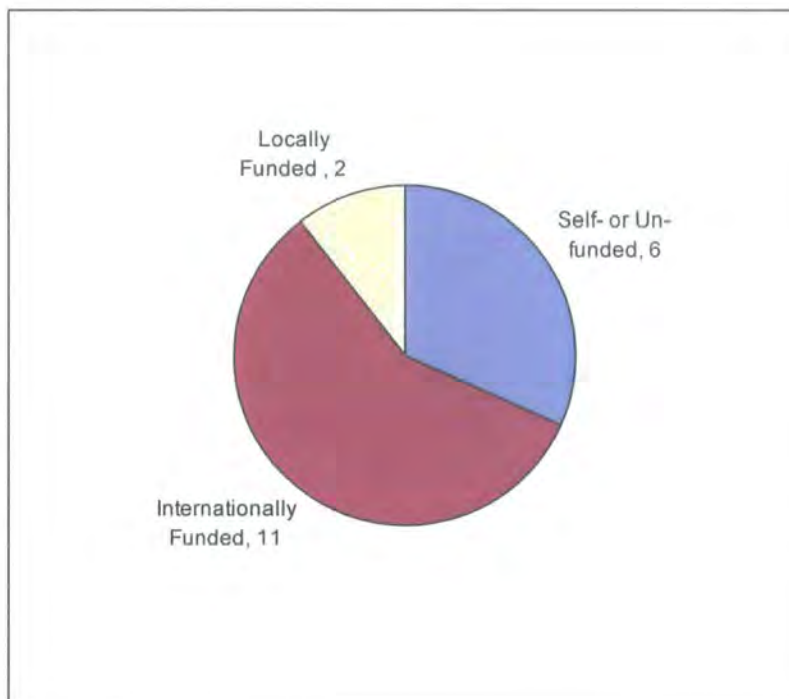


Figure 6.1 Funding Sources of NGOs in Brcko District, October 2002

(Source: NGO Survey)

This kind of quantitative overview, often found in intergovernmental reports (see UNDP, 2001), masks the competition for donor funding that permeates the NGO sector in Brčko. The use of neat categories to organise the varied financial positions of the Brčko NGOs sanitises and homogenises what is a messy and dynamic scenario. Rather than reproducing these categories, this chapter will examine the effect of structures of donor funding through the struggles initiated by NGOs over cultural and social capital. In doing so it is possible to sketch a *habitus* of donor funding, whereby NGOs are disposed to act in certain ways as they seek to invest capital in order to ‘gentrify’, and become visible and ‘classifiable’ to the agencies that govern Brčko District. At the same time, the demands of donors, while structuring NGO procedures, were flexible and reformulated by these experiences. In this way, the gentrification of NGOs is neither seen as ‘fixed’ nor a product of either structure or agency, but as an outcome of the prevailing *habitus*.

One key area of variation that is often overlooked in quantitative studies is temporality, as brief ‘snapshots’ fix in time the existence of NGOs. In contrast, ten months of fieldwork allowed an examination of the role of project-cycles in governing the activities of the NGOs in Brčko. As remarked by Sampson (1996), it appears that the agreed unit into which of NGO activity is divided is ‘the project’ (Sampson, 1996: 122), though there is no uniformity as to its scale or duration. All the NGOs in Brčko, regardless of whether they benefited from ‘core-cost’ financing from international organisations or otherwise, were in a constant process of applying for project funding. The difference between core-funded and un-funded organisations would become apparent between periods of funding, where those organisations without a long-term funding partner would often appear to ‘lie dormant’ awaiting potential future funding opportunities. A representative of the Bosniyak Women’s Association alluded to her frustration at the short-term nature of relations with donors: “donors do not want to work with us when the projects have finished”². The president of Vermont youth organisation, which had been funded by UNDP to carry out such varied projects as “drugs awareness education”, “basketball

² Interview Bosniyak Women’s Association, Brčko 21st February 2003.

tournaments” and “Brčko District Day entertainments”³, said that between project funding he ensured the survival of the organisation through donating income he earns through employment as a customs official on Brčko Bridge. This organisation managed to retain a physical presence between periods of project funding in a small office in the centre of town (see Figure 6.2). Other organisations did not have this luxury and the only evidence of their presence was the attendance of their member(s) at coordination meetings or the name of the organisation appearing on ‘official’ lists and spreadsheets from the District Government and OHR. The perpetual need to apply for project finance seemed to lead to a permanent struggle between the NGOs to distinguish themselves as the most appropriate organisation to receive donor funding. This struggle for recognition can be best viewed through the circulation, exchange and investment of social and cultural capital.



Figure 6.2 Vermont Youth Association, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

³ Taken from the survey of Vermont Youth Association, Brčko 30th September 2002.

6.3.1 Social Capital and NGO Autonomisation

Putnam (1993), drawing on the work of James Coleman (1965), defined ‘social capital’ as the accumulated value of groups or individuals working together. In contrast, Fukuyama (1995) collapsed the concept of ‘social capital’ into a single notion of “trust” that could be converted into ‘economic capital’ in the form of increased profit (Fukuyama, 1995). Bourdieu’s definition differs, as he saw the value of social capital in terms of “social connections” (Calhoun, 1993: 70) or “group membership” (Bourdieu, 1987: 4). Rather than assuming that social capital is generated by communal trust and cooperation, this definition focuses on the individual and their ability to accumulate capital. An examination of the Brčko NGOs as ‘fictive individuals’ highlights the struggle to forge social connections and the importance placed on group membership when attempting to capture donor funding. There was a wealth of evidence over the course of the fieldwork of the value NGOs placed on contacts within donor organisations, international organisations or the District Government. It was a representative of ‘Baza’ Anti-terrorist Association who first alluded to the existence of this apparent economy of social relations in Brčko:

There is no point trying to get a meeting with a member of the District government if you haven’t seen [the OHR Political Officer] first. [The Political Officer] will ring up and then you will get a meeting.

(Representative of ‘Baza’ NGO, Brčko November 22nd, 2002)

While the experience of the ‘Baza’ representative turned out not to be unique, it was not a formal requirement to receive the backing of the OHR before meeting a member of the District Government. As demonstrated by the comments made by a representative from Proni Institute of Social Education, personal contacts with members of the District Government made it a more approachable organisation:

We have always had good cooperation with the District Government. Because the people who work in government are people who I knew before the war, for example, Mr Adzić, who is Minister for Education, he was my teacher before the war so I can just knock on his door and ask what we need.

(Representative of Proni, Brčko 30th April 2003)

Despite the wide variety of individual experiences in contacting the various local and international agencies in Brčko, there appeared to be evidence that certain individuals and organisations (the OHR in particular) constituted gatekeepers to social capital. The importance of the OHR was encapsulated by the ‘material social capital’ of letters of support on headed notepaper and signed by the Supervisor, which would be included in funding applications. An example of such a letter can be seen in Figure 6.3 overleaf, reproduced from the pages of the UNDP Interim Evaluation Report, signifying that even the largest organisations required the social capital of contacts within the OHR.

The importance of social capital, or group membership, was more apparent in the case of nationalist funding. As mentioned above, both the Serbian Youth Association and the St. Sava’s Youth Association had gained funding from the RS Ministry for Sport and Youth. In the case of St. Sava’s Youth Association this funding was received because they “had friends in the Ministry” that wanted to “help our people”⁴, and led to the holding of a Serb Orthodox cycle rally in the centre of Brčko (see Figure 6.4 on page 197). When I met the representative from the Serbian Youth Association, he said he had gained funding for the “process of registering in Brčko” (discussed later in the chapter) their “radio programmes” and their “visits to Serbian Monasteries”⁵. The problem with this social capital was not in the conversion into economic capital, through links with the RS Ministry for Sport and Youth repeat funding was mentioned by both organisations as a formality. Instead, the difficulty was converting this social capital into other forms of social

⁴ Interview with a representative from St. Sava’s Youth Association, Brčko 3rd December 2002.

⁵ Interview with Serbian Youth Association, Brčko 11th September 2002.

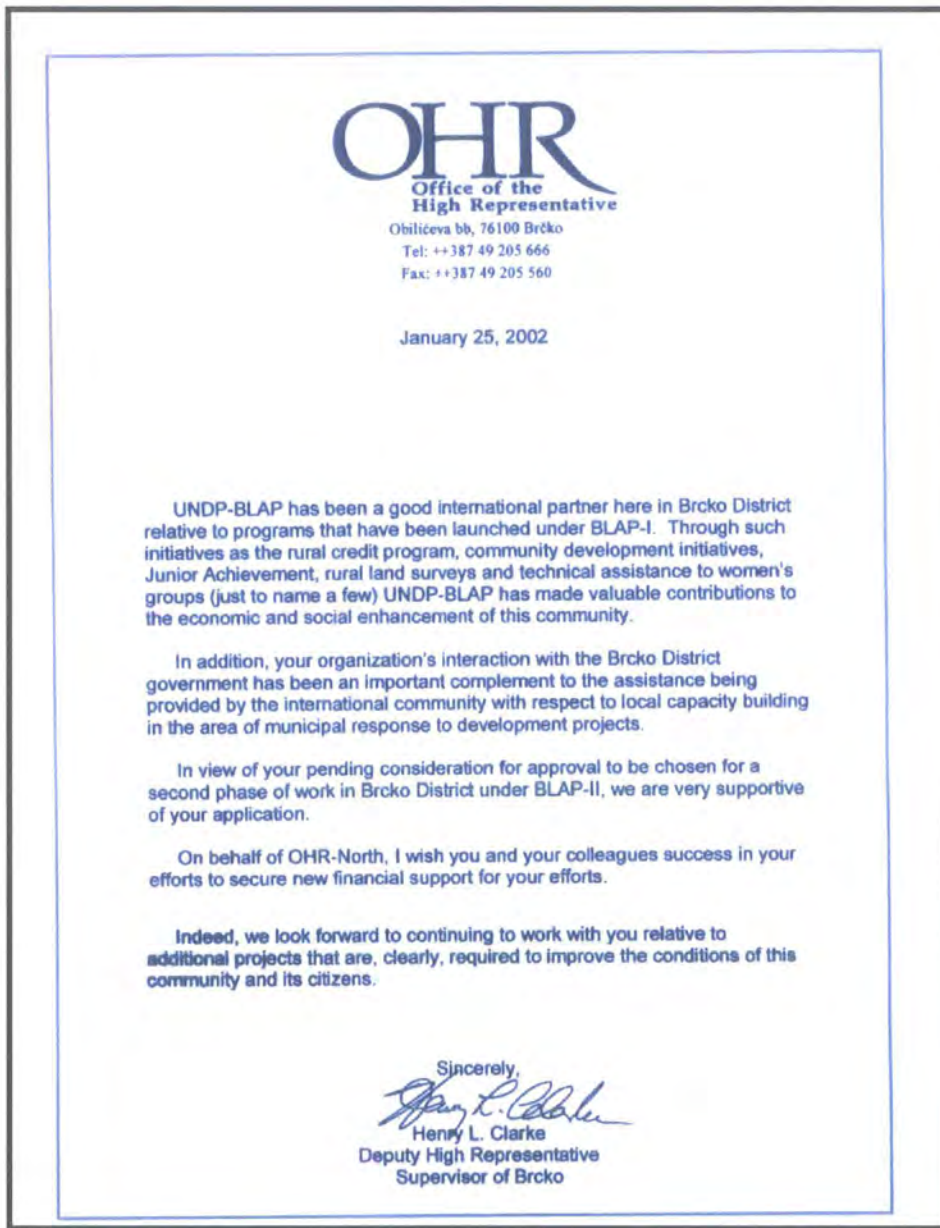


Figure 6.3 Letter of support for the UNDP BLAP

(Source: UNDP, 2001)



Figure 6.4 St. Sava's Youth Association cycle rally, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

capital, such as contacts with international donor agencies or the OHR. By adopting the prefix 'Serbian' the Serbian Youth Association admitted that "certain foreign organisations don't want to deal with us or give us funds"⁶. This nationalist social capital appears mutually exclusive; by drawing on the lucrative nationalist contacts funding from international sources committed to strategies of multi-ethnicity in post-conflict Bosnia was ruled out. This also demonstrates the ways in which those in control of symbolic capital (in this case the OHR improvising the state, see Chapter 5) can influence the exchange values of different forms of capital, specifically by placing a premium on 'multi-ethnicity'.

It is, however, important to note that for both 'international' and 'nationalist' social capital, the exchange values, bound as they are to the discursive priorities of those in authority, are not fixed in time and have shifted with political expedience and geopolitical circumstances. As an example, a representative of the Serb

⁶ Survey of the Serbian Youth Association, Brčko 21st October 2002.

Democratic Party (SDS), who had worked in the RS Ministry for Sport and Youth, discussed with some pride the fact that his political party had recently held a seminar funded by the US Embassy, “this was the first time the SDS has had cooperation with the Embassy”⁷. This kind of collaboration would have been unthinkable in the past, particularly considering the mutual animosity between the US Government and the Radovan Karadžić-founded SDS. It seems that the discourse of multi-ethnicity has, on a Bosnia-wide scale, seemingly diminished in importance over the perceived move from post-conflict reconstruction to the *realpolitik* of transition and international withdrawal. This shift, or narrowing, of priorities was demonstrated in the interview with the Brčko Supervisor. When questioned about the issue of the RS directly funding NGOs in Brčko he responded “it is not in my mandate to worry about that [...] as long as they are not breaking Brčko laws. You know, I think the NGOs should be free to scrounge money wherever they can”⁸. The concerns of the Supervisor, as enshrined in the Final Award, lay rather in the “government financial area – there has been a failure by the RS to pay its obligations to the District [...] and they tried to privatise some companies in the District without consulting us first”⁹. This example demonstrates the valorization of economic discourses by the Supervisor and the Final Award, marking a shift from ‘post-conflict’ concerns of inter-ethnic reconciliation. In this way, the negative social capital of nationalist discourses has diminished as processes of ‘proper neo-liberal economic governance’ have taken precedent over concerns of reconciliation.

The value, in terms of social capital, placed on contacts with donor organisations and members of authority was not reflected in relationships between the NGOs themselves. Rather than being valued, contacts between NGOs were often perceived as an institutional threat. Those organisations with little permanent funding would sometimes suggest that the internationally financed organisations were merely “keeping an office alive”¹⁰ while, in turn, those organisations with long-

⁷ Interview with a representative of the SDS, Brčko 14th April 2003.

⁸ Interview with Brčko Supervisor, Ambassador Henry Clarke, April 24th 2003.

⁹ Interview with Brčko Supervisor, Ambassador Henry Clarke, April 24th 2003.

¹⁰ This phrase was used by the representative of Grčica Youth Association in an interview 22nd November 2002 and was described in similar terms by a representative of Vermont Youth Association, Brčko 22nd February 2003.

term funding would accuse the smaller NGOs of “existing only on paper”¹¹ or being allied to “nationalist politics”¹². It is interesting to chart how these views emerged over the course of the fieldwork period in Brčko District. In the initial survey the NGOs were keen to discuss the processes and fruits of their active collaboration with other NGOs, perhaps a signal of the capital attached to portraying your organisation as a ‘team player’. As I witnessed the work of the NGOs over the course of the fieldwork, coupled with the dynamic of repeat interviewing, the representatives from the NGOs were more critical, viewing collaboration as a ‘waste of time’ or ‘impossible’. For a representative from Firefly Youth Project this came down to issues of competition:

There is loads of competition between NGOs for the funding because people really feel like they are in competition, but if you talk about the collaborating with each other and get double the funding instead of competing with each other people are really suspicious about that.

(Representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 15th September 2002)

Competition between the organisations was often expressed in the interviews through a complaint that there were ‘too many’ NGOs in Brčko, as suggested by the president of Vermont:

In Brčko there are many organisations, but they don't have very much work and then those organisations will die [...] when there are three or four organisations left that will be good.

(President of Vermont Youth Association, Brčko 25th February 2003)

Rather than collaboration, the prevalence of competition for funding seemed to engender secrecy amongst the NGOs themselves as to future funding

¹¹ This phrase was used in an interview with a representative from Firefly Youth Project on 15th September 2002.

opportunities or proposals that they were currently compiling. The issue of future funding was one area of the interviews that was regularly greeted with a hushed ‘no comment’ by informants, as this information was seemingly embargoed until the outcome was known or perhaps until the closing date for proposal applications had passed. The Brčko Centre for Information and Legal Help (*Centar za Informativnu Pravnu i Pomoc* or CIPP) was candid about this in saying that they did not want to discuss the proposal they were submitting to the UNHCR as this could “jeopardise”¹³ their chances of success. A representative of the agricultural NGO Counterpart saw this secrecy as an element of inter-NGO jealousy:

Organisations are jealous, especially organisations that are working in similar jobs. They are jealously keeping their files and documents and studies in their office. If somebody is doing a study, what about it doesn't matter, but after finishing that study that organisation will jealously keep that study in their folders and not share it. If someone is asking for that document or study that person within the branch office will have the feeling that a person is begging them for that informations and the person will have the feeling that that information is secret and no-body else can see it apart from the person in that organisation. [...] It is a competition to see who will be better. If you are better you can find funds better or faster.

(Counterpart Official ‘B’, Brčko 22nd May 2003)

In addition to retaining institutional ‘secrets’, certain NGOs viewed other organisations as ‘too political’ to warrant collaboration. The NGOs felt that proximity to political organisations could endanger donor funding. Particular scepticism was shown towards the ‘Youth Coordination Body’ (YCB), an initiative of the OSCE to improve communication between youth NGOs and political parties in Brčko, established in 2001. In terms of NGOs the objective, according to the Head of Brčko OSCE, was to make them “more visible” in Brčko, as “the Mayor

¹² This was an accusation made on many occasions during the interviews, for example by the representative of ‘Baza’ Anti-terrorist Association, November 22nd 2002; by Counterpart Official ‘B’, 22nd May, 2002 and by with a representative from Firefly Youth Project on 15th September 2002.

¹³ Survey of Centre for Legal Information and Help, Brčko 22nd October 2002.

perceives them as reactive, rather than active”¹⁴. The formation of the coordination body was also in line with prevailing thoughts amongst OSCE and OHR that NGO coordination required guidance. As one OHR official remarked:

The coordination between international organisations and NGOs is not bad provided it is driven by the International Organisations. NGO/NGO coordination is absolutely non-existent. And even an International Organisation can't drive that. You can't get two NGOs in and say 'Hey look, you are doing this road and you are doing this bridge why don't you get together'. 'I'll tell you why we don't get together because the two of us are both going for the same donor'.

(Representative from OHR Brčko, 2nd June 2003)

The approach of the YCB towards coordination, including both political parties and NGOs in one committee, proved contentious. On the one hand, the political parties were positive about the initiative, with the SDS suggesting it would be “useful in the future as an institution of democracy”¹⁵; the PDP (*Partija Demokratskog Progresa*) echoed this stance and declared it as “useful”¹⁶, while the SDP representative considered it “nice...we understand each other, we support each other”¹⁷. On the other hand, NGOs seemed more sceptical about the combination of political parties and NGOs. Some organisations had been part of the YCB at its inception, but had since stopped attending the meetings. A representative from ‘Baza’ Anti-terrorist organisation explained:

¹⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 2, taken from an interview with the Head of Brčko OSCE, October 17th 2002.

¹⁵ Interview with a representative from SDS, Brčko 14th April 2003.

¹⁶ Interview with a representative from PDP, Brčko 14th April 2003.

¹⁷ Interview with a representative from SDP, Brčko 16th April 2003.

At the beginning there were six organisations (SDP Youth, Baza, SDS Youth, SDA Youth, Economic School and *Brčaska Udruženja Mladih*). At that time we were just young people and we forgot the politics, but now it is something else. The Serb Radical Party joined and it turned nationalist.

(Representative from 'Baza', Brčko 22nd November 2002)

The concern over the combination of party politics and youth NGOs was repeated on many occasions. One American NGO worker, volunteering in Brčko, saw the combination as “dangerous”:

I think it is really quite dangerous actually. I think it is really quite a mistake. By including political parties, we are not talking about political parties that I am familiar with at home, we are talking about some nasty bastards. I don't want to hold people responsible, but the organisations themselves are responsible for [...] obstructing returns and all that kind of stuff. To put them all in one boat encourages the political parties to take over.

(Interview with Counterpart Official 'A', Brčko 15th May 2003)

This wariness of the YCB was shared by certain international donor organisations. A representative from the German Development agency GTZ (*Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*) felt that the YCB was “a problem because it involves political parties”¹⁸. Her organisation was reticent to work alongside the YCB, preferring instead to set up their own coordination initiative the Local Youth Government (LOV or *Lokal Omladinski Vlada*). She explained that this initiative was required to “normalise the atmosphere” between the NGOs:

¹⁸ Interview with a representative from GTZ, Brčko June 4th 2003.

It was very tense, there was a problem in the atmosphere between the organisations. As a result we held series of workshops to try and improve things. One of the results of the workshops was the establishment of a local youth council.

(Representative from GTZ, June 4th 2003)

It seems from the polarised responses from the political parties and the NGOs that membership of the YCB had costs and benefits for each group in terms of social capital. For the political parties such membership allowed them to be seen to work with NGOs, raising their profile with both their electorate and with organisations such as the OSCE and the OHR. There appeared to be a clear gain in social capital in associating with internationally recognised ‘civil society actors’. For the NGOs, however, there was a potential risk. For some, being tainted as ‘political’ could have repercussions in terms of gaining future funding, for others the social capital of meeting with political parties could lead to financial support from the political parties themselves. How the NGOs played this trade-off between competing social capitals was mediated by their individual strategy for institutional survival.

By presenting the social connections of Brčko NGOs in terms of social capital the shifting value placed on different relationships comes to light. In contrast to Putnam’s (1993) conception of ‘social capital’ as cooperation between individuals or groups, the struggle to gain funding in Brčko has encouraged competition and suspicion between the NGOs. While civil society is defined within certain policy scripts as an ‘autonomous’ group of organisations, the autonomy in this case is not from agencies of authority but conversely between each individual NGO. The process of accumulating social capital binds the NGOs in closer ties to donors and the agencies of the improvised state. The attempts to gain funding and ensure institutional survival serve to individualise the NGOs as they operate in competition for scarce symbolic resources. These exchanges and accumulations begin to illustrate the gentrification of civil society in post conflict Brčko, as NGOs become

containers for various kinds of social capital. This process is explored in greater detail through related exchange and accumulation of cultural capital.

6.3.2 Cultural Capital and NGO Homogenisation

On a series of occasions in Brčko I heard the remark that an organisation, perhaps a political party or small private company, was behaving ‘as if they were an NGO’. This comment suggests that there were a series of specific behavioural and cultural traits that were associated with NGOs in Brčko. When I questioned further what was meant by “behaving as if an NGO” the usual response was not that the organisation was committed to social welfare or was acting in a non-profit capacity, but rather that it was wealthy or had close links with international organisations. While these imaginaries may be dismissed as unrepresentative or anecdotal, they are indicators of the way in which NGOs have emerged in post-conflict Brčko as a cultural community. Just as the social contacts of the NGOs have been mediated through the exchange of *social* capital, the embodied traits and behaviour have been shaped through the accumulation and circulation of *cultural* capital. This economic metaphor illustrates how the struggle for certain traits works to reproduce the NGO sector in Brčko. This section will examine how the practices of NGO funding serve to mediate this struggle.

Bourdieu (1986) describes cultural capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986: 248), though he also offered the more concise definition of “informational capital” (Bourdieu, 1987: 4). From these descriptions cultural capital has been variously interpreted as “education credentials” (Calhoun, 1993: 70); “culturally valued taste” (Mahar et al, 1990: 13), or “the knowledge and skills acquired in early socialisation or through education” (Painter, 2000: 243). Consequently, it has been used as a theoretical tool to explain the role of education in reproducing social divisions (Painter, 2000: 240). As Harker (1990) points out,

this work examines the importance of cultural capital accumulation in reproducing patterns of power and dominance:

Just as our dominant economic institutions are structured to favour those who already possess economic capital, so our educational institutions are structured to favour those who already possess cultural capital in the form of *habitus* of the dominant cultural fraction.

(Harker, 1990: 87)

As a result, those with the appropriate cultural capital are reinforced with success (Harker, 1990: 87). These processes of social reproduction can be identified within the NGO sector in Brčko District, as funding regimes ‘reward’ organisations with particular cultural capital at the expense of others. This serves to reinforce the metaphor of gentrification, as NGOs emerge as a cultural community distinct from other organisations of civil society.

The funding of NGOs in Brčko was organised around the central unit of the ‘proposal’. There was wide variation in the form, function and content of the proposals, though they all corresponded with an activity that would take place over a bounded period of time, referred to as ‘a project’ (see discussion above). Every NGO contacted during the fieldwork, regardless of their funding status, size or institutional objectives, organised their work into this proposal-project structure. So the USDA-funded agricultural NGO Counterpart organised its re-forestation initiatives through distinct seedling distributions; the Serbian Youth Organisation initiated projects involving trips to monasteries or sports competitions; the ‘Baza’ Anti-terrorist organisation was planning a project consisting of a roundtable on “the causes of terrorism in Brčko”¹⁹. While occasionally the proposal process was socialised through meetings or workshops, in most cases it operated through written documents and remote contact such as emails and telephone conversations. Consequently, the funding system involved the NGOs exhibiting the ‘correct’ cultural and behavioural traits for effective communication with donors, in addition to the technical knowledge of how to complete a proposal in a way that would be

attractive to a funding body. These interlinked traits define the cultural capital of NGOs, and they are examined below in three sections: ability with the English language, knowledge of donor discourses, and skills to negotiate the bureaucratic demands of proposal writing.

The first skill that appeared to be valued by the proposal process was knowledge of the English language. A representative from Firefly Youth Project explained the primacy of English:

I never met any donor who took any proposal in our language. Everything should be completed in English or French or Spanish or I don't know but English mainly. In last couple of years we did not write any proposals in our language. I mean, it was specified it should be in English. I mean, even if they have their offices here - a local person doesn't decide about donation so his boss must read it and I don't think he will translate it instead of us. I never met a donor who does that [laughs].

(Representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 27th March 2003)

The proposal writing process, however, did not simply demand knowledge of English but an expertise in the particular technical style demanded by funding agencies and government donors. Regardless of the level of skill of spoken English, Bosnian NGO members were categorised as 'non-native speakers' by the rigorous demands of proposal writing. A USAID representative in Sarajevo explained her "frustration" at poorly written English:

Someone should do a PhD on language construction and civil society development. It is inappropriate to use the active voice here, OK, so everything is "the youth policy group was formed", by who! OK. "A meeting was held where something was decided", well what was decided? So those of us who speak English as a first language and been taught that you don't write or think or speak in the passive unless you intentionally want to soften something or don't know are very frustrated.

(Representative of USAID, Sarajevo 29th May 2003)

¹⁹ Taken from survey of 'Baza' Anti-terrorist NGO, Brčko 14th October 2002

This native-speaker/local binary was confirmed by an American volunteer to a USDA funded NGO in Brčko. He stated that the headquarters in Washington had become “very concerned” with the quality of the reports written by Brčko staff. On his arrival in Brčko corresponding with Washington became one of his core duties:

[...] I have ended up writing the reports. Especially when you are working for a government donor, it is unacceptable to have bad English and that is the reality of the situation. It is the same way that I have trouble learning Bosnian. English is a very forgiving language in spoken English, like you can mess around with all kinds of rules and no-one gives a damn. But in terms of written English you immediately notice mistakes. Like if you drop an article - in spoken English no-one cares but in a document you notice it immediately.

(Counterpart Official ‘A’, Brčko 15th May 2003)

The irony behind these comments is that out of four Bosnian members of staff in this NGO, three were recruited on account of their skills at English. Indeed, the head of office had previously been a translator at the S-For McGovern Base, while another staff member had worked in a similar capacity for the IPTF in Brčko. This level of skill had been sufficient for regular communication through email and telephone conversation with the head office in Washington, and for OHR coordination meetings, as they have always been held in English. However, it had not proved adequate for the ‘official’ channels of funding proposals and project reports. Through this binary of ‘native-speaker’ / ‘local staff member’ the level of language skill requisite for donor funding appears to have become unattainable to Bosnian staff members. While knowledge of English was vital for rapport with international organisations, OHR coordination meetings and day-to-day communication with donors or headquarters, when communication was deemed official, a ‘native’ English speaker seemed to be required. While there were distinct advantages in terms of cultural capital of an individual speaking English, this binary ensured that there was still greater capital in an NGO retaining links with, or employing, ‘international’ or ‘non-local’ staff.

These benefits had not escaped the attention of individual donors as they had attempted to enact policies to counter this binary. In particular, international donors had begun to value local NGOs over international organisations. This strategy demonstrates the symbolic capital possessed by donor organisations²⁰ as they invest ‘being local’ as a trait with particular cultural capital. This strategy fostered a discourse of ‘localisation’ of NGOs that sought to develop “sustainable locally-run, voluntary organisations”²¹, a policy explained to me, perhaps ironically, by an Italian employee of UNDP in Sarajevo. The discourse of localisation was reflected in the UNDP Brčko Local Action Programme (BLAP), where preference was given to funding local NGOs, as part of a broader aim to “capacity-build the Brčko NGOs”²². Interestingly, despite this local focus in the UNDP and EU schemes, both their funding procedures demanded proposals were written in English. Thus despite the premium being placed on local NGOs, the application demands re-inscribed the requirement for ‘native’ English speakers.

It seems from these examples that despite the donor discourse of localisation, ‘being local’ was still trumped in cultural capital terms by being able to speak English. In order to maximise their cultural capital, many of the NGOs in Brčko exhibited a compromise between this premium on ‘locality’ and the donor requirement for competent English speakers. Through such a compromise, hybrid NGOs emerged which were both international and local and they deployed these identities in order to maximise their capital. For example, Firefly Youth Project received three-year funding from the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Trust Fund directed towards creating a sustainable local NGO. At the completion of this funding cycle (in 2002) the organisation changed its name to *Omladinski Projekt ‘Svitac’* (a direct translation of Firefly Youth Project) and began the process of registering in Brčko. Despite this new local organisation, Firefly Youth Project still exists in the UK and continues to draft money to *Svitac* in order to meet its running

²⁰ The definition of symbolic capital as “the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu, 1989: 23) was discussed in Chapter 5.

²¹ Interview with UNDP Official, Sarajevo, 29th May 2003.

²² Interview with Projects Officer at UNDP Brčko, 15th April 2003.

costs, while also supporting the organisation through assistance with proposal writing. The international contacts retained by *Svitac* also enable continuing visits by UK volunteers. These were ostensibly to implement short-term projects (such as music lessons or art projects) though the programme manager acknowledged an additional benefit that “they can go to all the OHR meetings for us”²³. It seems that in the case of *Firefly/Svitac* this was simulated self-sustainability, where ‘localisation’ was deployed to attract donor funding, though for logistical purposes international links were retained. In another instance, Counterpart had created an entirely new organisation through which it planned to ‘localise’. In 2000, as part of an “exit strategy”²⁴, the Washington-based head office of Counterpart suggested that they establish a voluntary, locally-run organisation. This request led to the formation of *Eko*, an environmental NGO which registered locally, had an entirely local staff-team (comprised of the Counterpart staff), and could apply for funding from which Counterpart was restricted as it was funded by the USDA. *Eko* was donated office space by Counterpart and the programme manager shared her time between the two organisations, though this arrangement led to confusion as explained by a Counterpart official:

The central problem for *Eko* has been this identity issue: is it Counterpart? Is it the future existence of Counterpart? Is it a separate NGO? Or is it an amoeba where the two are kind of joined but will then break off? It has never really been able to solve that crisis of identity.

(Counterpart Official ‘A’, Brčko 15th May 2003)

Though *Eko* successfully gained funding from the IRC and received a donation of equipment from S-For civil affairs, these were not enough to ensure sustainability. The fragility of this hybridity was illustrated when *Eko*’s president left her job with Counterpart and *Eko* disintegrated. Despite this failing, both the *Svitac* and *Eko* examples demonstrate the way in which labels such as ‘international’ and ‘local’ are reformulated and deployed by NGOs in order to maximise their cultural capital.

²³ Interview with a representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 27th March 2003

²⁴ Interview with a Counterpart Official ‘A’, Brčko 15th May 2003

These experiences of 'localisation' reflect how the funding system required more than simply a knowledge of the English language, but also an awareness of the priorities and discourses of development agencies. Many of the NGOs felt that they could not "keep up" with changing donor agendas and found the shifting priorities "bewildering"²⁵. A representative of Firefly Youth Project/*Svitac* explained that when it came to writing proposals they "didn't know what donors wanted to hear"²⁶:

But what our organisation actually needs is a person to help us with fund raising. Someone to sit with us and write one good project proposal - we need someone with experience in fundraising to find something for one year or three years, because honestly two of us won't be able to do it. Because we know what one project proposal has - we know we wrote a couple of proposals but we don't have experience with donors [...] You know very well when you write project proposals you must make it like a report - when you report you know what that person wants to hear. We do not have that experience.

(Representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 27th March 2003)

The notion of "one good proposal" suggests that cultural capital can be held in material form, in the same way that symbolic capital was materialised through letters of support from figures in authority. This comment also points to the way in which NGOs in Brčko often divorced needs assessment from the technical process of writing a donor proposal. Contact with donors was framed in terms "they wanted to hear" as opposed to reflecting the ideologies or activities of the NGOs. As with language skills, the importance of being able to understand and reproduce donor discourses influenced the recruitment policies of the NGOs in Brčko. Staff with experience of international organisations were perceived as preferential to those with specialist technical knowledge (such as agricultural knowledge in an agricultural NGO). As a result, individual cultural capital was not accumulated through formal

²⁵ These comments were made by the Bosnijak Women's Association, 21st February 2003, and the Paraplegics' Association, 9th December 2002, though the sentiment was shared by a number of NGOs.

²⁶ Interview with a representative from Firefly Youth Project, Brčko 27th March 2003.

education or qualifications, but rather through knowledge of English and experience of working with NGOs and international organisations within Brčko.

This valuation of cultural capital had two consequences for the NGO sector. The first is that it reproduced the notion that NGOs were ‘international’, as the skills required to work or volunteer related to knowledge of donor discourses as opposed to skills learnt at school or college in Brčko. In a second consequence, this interpretation of value has led to a small group of individuals exploiting their capital and moving between different short-term contracts within international organisations (such as the OSCE, OHR and UNDP) and the larger NGOs. For example, the entire UNDP BLAP staff team, excluding the Australian programme manager, were previously employed in NGOs (two from Firefly Youth Project, one from Vermont). The emergence of this group of ‘development professionals’, with English skills and expertise with donor organisations, has not only blurred the institutional boundaries between NGOs and international organisations but also homogenised the discourses of the NGOs in Brčko. As the NGOs and donors attended the same workshops, UNDP training sessions, or OHR Coordination meetings the rhetoric of the organisations has begun to coalesce around a series of key phrases, such as ‘roundtable’, ‘multi-ethnic reconciliation’, ‘capacity building’, and ‘economic development’²⁷. The BLAP Programme Manager celebrated this emerging NGO discourse as an indication of the success of their training programmes:

At first, when the project [UNDP BLAP] first opened in August 2000, we kept getting applications for ‘non-developmental flashes’: like a new soccer field, a new building or metal soccer poles and not wooden ones [laughs]. These have moved to ‘access bridges’, ‘roads’ or ‘conflict resolution towards training for community leaders’.

(Programme Manager UNDP BLAP, Brčko 18th February 2003)

The Regional Coordinator of Proni, however, did not share this positive assessment of the move away from ‘non-developmental flashes’. She felt that the constant

²⁷ These four phrases are chosen as they appeared in numerous NGO surveys.

training of NGOs in writing donor proposals and following appropriate donor procedure was stifling creativity and leading to repetitive projects:

[...] people have been put through the same courses, with the same people, with the same methodology every time. You know that thing of just visioning? You sit down and think it is actually possible. Dream something and know it is actually attainable. Because what happens is that people say 'up the road they have an internet cafe so we will have an internet café' so down the road will then have an internet cafe. Instead of thinking here is a need in society and we have these resources, what can we put together to meet that need? But that kind of creative thinking and planning is just not here.

(Regional Coordinator Proni, Brčko 7th May 2004)

This comment suggests that rather than inspiring innovation or focussing on needs assessment, the discourse of donors was valuing the ability to reproduce development rhetoric, a 'trick' that could be learnt through recruiting individuals possessing the cultural capital of working within NGOs and international organisations.

In addition to the requirement for language skills and knowledge of donor discourses, a final aspect of cultural capital that shaped the NGO sector was the ability to negotiate the more mundane bureaucratic requirements of the proposal writing process. These related to having the time to complete the often-lengthy period of correspondence with potential donors and access to computers and office facilities. The importance of these factors was confirmed by the NGO survey where the Brčko NGOs perceived "access to office facilities" as the second biggest problem, after more general issues of scarce funding. Many of the NGOs had to borrow space from other organisations and agencies, for example the Bosnijak Women's Association met in a nursery school in Brodusa and the Grčica Youth Association met in a roadside café on the outskirts of Brčko. According to both organisations these improvised spaces were sufficient for meetings, though they did

not provide the office support necessary for finding and contacting donors²⁸. These concerns and complaints led to an interesting feedback loop where office equipment (necessary to negotiate the bureaucratic demands of donor funding) became a key feature of NGO funding applications in Brčko. This was reflected in the exasperated comments of the Head of OSCE Brčko when he said “I am always telling NGOs ‘don’t just ask for another copy machine!’”²⁹ This over-bureaucratisation has led to offices themselves holding material cultural capital as they have become a key feature of ‘being an NGO’.

A second facet of the bureaucratic funding system relates to the length of time it took to receive confirmation that a project could be financed. This was particularly evident in the case of the agricultural NGO Counterpart, which was engaging in reforestation and food security projects in Brčko District. Though benefiting from permanent funding from USDA, each project implemented by Counterpart Brčko had to be approved by their head office and by the American NGO Mercy USA, who were partners in the consortium and had a field office in Tuzla. In addition to the language difficulties discussed above, gaining approval for a project involved a bureaucratic process that could last over six months. According to one Counterpart official this had the consequence that projects became “more conservative” as no-one wanted to “end up wasting time on something that is going to end up not getting approved”³⁰. This official added, “you couldn’t ask [the backstopping officer in Washington] a question as if it dropped off the bottom of her *Outlook* screen she would never answer it”³¹. Another member of Counterpart connected the lack of innovation in the projects to job security in admitting, “our projects didn’t have much creativity [...] we were scared we might lose our jobs”³². In order to ensure funding, and to expedite the bureaucratic process, the projects of Counterpart became smaller in scale and repetitive. This led one Mercy USA

²⁸ Information taken from an interview with a representative of Grčica Youth Association, Brčko 22nd November 2002 and a representative of Bosniyak Women’s Association, Brčko 21st February 2003.

²⁹ Interview with the Head of Brčko OSCE, Brčko 17th October 2002.

³⁰ Interview with Counterpart Official ‘A’, Brčko 15th May 2003.

³¹ Interview with Counterpart Official ‘A’, Brčko 18th September 2004.

³² Interview with Counterpart Official ‘B’, Brčko 22nd May 2003.

official to question their projects suggesting, “they weren’t really reforestation - maybe gardening”³³.

The struggle over cultural capital continues to reinforce the process of social gentrification. As particular organisations accumulate the cultural capital necessary to gain donor funding they become recognised as NGOs. But this accumulation process also has a series of effects. The donor system has valued particular cultural traits that, while open to compromise and improvisation, have gone on to shape the attributes and activities of the NGOs. In the case of English language skills, this has continued the trend observed with social capital in binding NGOs ever closer with international organisations, while also leading to compromise of ‘hybrid localisation’. The value placed on replication of particular donor discourses and phrases has also served to disconnect needs assessments from individual communities and drained proposals of creativity. Finally, the bureaucratic requirements of the donor system have led to NGOs placing cultural value in running an office. Such bureaucratic demands serve to restrict the transformative qualities of NGOs, once heralded as an attribute of civil society. The funding system, by reproducing only those organisations which exhibit stores of social and cultural capital, has privileged individualistic and conservative organisations which seek to reproduce the status quo rather than acting as loci of dissent or radicalism. To examine this political effect of social gentrification in greater detail the articulation between civil society and the state in Brčko requires close examination.

6.4 The State and NGO Regulation

The binary between state and civil society has been a feature of discourses of international intervention in Bosnia (see Chapter 5). Recent academic scholarship has challenged this binary in two contrasting ways. The first has been to retain the underlying epistemology of the binary, though challenging the scale on which it is conceived. This scholarship has focussed attention on scenarios where the state appears to be weakening, either as a consequence of increasingly globalised forms of

³³ Interview with official from Mercy USA, Brčko, 15th September 2004.

governance or where the institutions of the state have 'failed'. Consequently, the term 'global civil society' has been introduced to suggest that civil society can "only be understood in the context of the global, in contrast to earlier centuries when civil society only had meaning in relation to the territorial state" (Kaldor, 2003: 142). This approach represents a call for a rethinking of democratic participation to the global scale, in much the same way as Held's *Cosmopolitan Democracy* (1995) or Archibugi's *Cosmopolitics* (2003). In doing so, the central binary is reconfigured to place global civil society as a counterpoint to the 'global' state as played out through institutions of such as the Multinational Corporations, the World Bank, or the United Nations. Within such accounts, the role of civil society as a distinct site of democratic action remains, though rather than organising against the state, it is against "remote forces out of their reach" (Roy, 1995: 2005).

In contrast, the second challenge to the binary between the state and civil society has been to cast doubt over the validity of the state and civil society as separate entities. Rather than viewing the state as separate entity, removed from society, the state has been conceived as a "set of processes" (Trouillot, 2001: 127), a "relation" (Harvey, 1976) or "an idea" (Abrams, 1988: 76). Drawing on Foucault's (1991) conception of 'governmentality', Trouillot (2001) suggests that the state's materiality resides much less in its institutions than in the "reworking of processes and relations of power so as to create new spaces for the deployment of power" (Trouillot, 2001: 127). By unsettling the notion of the state and socialising it as a practice as opposed to monolithic institutions, its distinction with civil society becomes more blurred and problematic. Navaro-Yashin (2002) suggests that rather than proposing the autonomization of civil society from the state, it would be more appropriate to refer to a "changing enmeshed relationship" (Navaro-Yashin, 2002: 132). In particular, such work has drawn attention to the way in which civil society is enrolled into the practices, techniques and technologies of state power. Civil society is therefore seen as an illusion, a trick executed by the state to conjure notions of autonomy or emancipation, when the reality is a collection of performances that reproduce state power.

The evidence of civil society gentrification supports this latter interpretation of a blurred binary between civil society and the state. As seen in the case of struggles for donor funding, the process of gentrification binds the organisations in closer ties to agencies of authority whilst simultaneously encouraging individualisation as the gentrified NGOs compete for limited resources. These processes serve to constrict the ability of gentrified NGOs to act as a “transmission belt” (Mohan, 2002: 127) between the citizenry and the state and, as such, they are more suggestive of the “enmeshed relationship” referred to by Navaro-Yashin (2002). The ‘enmeshed’ nature of the state and civil society is concealed through the reproduction of suggestions of autonomy by focussing on its ‘non-governmental’ nature. Even the title ‘non-governmental organisation’ implies that the founding criterion of such organisations is separateness from the state. The example of state/civil society relations in Brčko points to how processes of regulation have continued to both gentrify civil society into a visible and capital-rich group of organisations while reproducing this trick of autonomy.

As discussed in Chapter 5, numerous local and international actors and agencies improvise the state in Brčko, though the final ability to classify and legitimise is reserved for the OHR as it holds reserves of symbolic capital. One of the ways through which this symbolic capital was ‘bureaucratized’ (Bourdieu, 1994: 11) was the legal procedure for classifying what counts as ‘civil society’. Within the Brčko context this process of classification is reflected in the Law of Associations and Foundations, drawn up by the OHR’s legal department in Sarajevo and published in the Brčko District official legal gazette in December 2002. The central feature of this new law was the demand for all NGOs to register locally in Brčko District. This process dominated the interviews with the NGOs over the period of the fieldwork. Prior to the passing of the new Law of Associations and Foundations the NGOs were expected to register in one of four places, dependent upon the organisation’s ethno-national affiliation. The three main ethnic groups registered in three nearby towns, with Bosnijak NGOs registering in Tuzla, Serb NGOs in Bijeljina, Croat NGOs in Orasje, while international organisations often registered in Sarajevo. This situation divided the regulation and taxation of NGOs between the

Federation and the RS, a situation that was deemed unsustainable following the Final Award and subsequent creation of Brčko District. The new Law of Associations and Foundations was designed to harmonise the taxation and regulation of the NGOs, while also ending the continued division of the District's organisations down entity lines. For the District Government, the process of re-registration would automatically compile a definitive list of organisations operating in Brčko, which the NGO liaison officer at the government said would be "helpful for offering project funding to NGOs in the future"³⁴. The Brčko Mayor echoed this sentiment stating that he wanted to start funding NGOs "who offered good proposals"³⁵.

The incentives offered by the District Government were effective in mobilising all the NGOs of Brčko to prioritise re-registration. The enthusiastic reaction of the NGOs seemed to diminish when faced by the bureaucratic and expensive process of re-registration. The process was variously described as "very complicated"³⁶, "chaos, chaos [with head in hands]"³⁷, "expensive"³⁸ and "a mess"³⁹. A representative of Firefly Youth Project/*Svitac* (FR) explained the bureaucratic demands of re-registration:

FR: The thing is that we find out that we have to follow the process of renting space and everything like we are another organisation, like we are a business.

AJ: Like a business?

FR: Yes. Because we have to, before that we have to go to court to give our constitution and state the people who will be part of our assembly, management board and steering board. We then have to find space [and] to sign contract with landlord, we have to stamp that contract in the Municipality and then with that contract we have to go to tax inspection to give them the contract and they will stamp it.

³⁴ Interview with NGO Liaison Officer, Brčko District Government, 22nd May 2003.

³⁵ Interview with the Brčko District Mayor, Brčko 8th May 2003.

³⁶ Interview with a representative from St. Sava's Youth Association, Brčko 3rd December 2002.

³⁷ Interview with a representative of Paraplegics Association, Brčko 9th December 2002.

³⁸ Interview with a representative from the Serbian Youth Association, Brčko 11th September 2002.

³⁹ Interview with the UNDP BLAP Programme Manager, Brčko 18th February 2003.

AJ: Do these stamps cost money?

FR: The stamp in municipality costs 30KM and I don't know how much at the tax inspection [will be] but when they put the stamp on it then we can go to the court. But I don't know how it will be at the Court. I heard 500KM and then there are some other taxes and then we have to publish it in the *Službeni Glasnik* [legal gazette] and that also costs money about 6Km a word. So I don't know. [...] I mean the process is completely like we are opening a shop.

(Excerpt from an Interview with a representative from Firefly Youth Project,
Brčko 27th March 2003)

As this exchange suggests, the registration process was governed by uncertainty and guesswork. There appeared to be a lack of any clear information as to the cost of the process, as a number of different agencies all demanded a range of seemingly arbitrary taxes and payments. The Programme Manager of the UNDP BLAP felt that this confusion was a consequence of the timing of the legislation:

I don't think the government passed the legislation ever thinking they would have to implement it, they thought that there would be elections first.

(Interview with UNDP BLAP Programme Manager, Brčko 18th February
2003)

As a result of the legislation and its chaotic implementation certain organisations found it impossible to register in Brčko. As with the donor demands discussed above, these barriers can be interpreted in terms of the accumulation of different varieties of capital. The high registration fee and taxes ensure that only those organisations with the requisite funds could become a legally legitimate NGO, again underlining the importance of economic capital. A number of organisations found that social capital could often be deployed in lieu of economic capital. Both Firefly Youth project and *Eko* used contacts in the government to gain assistance

from the EU-funded Brčko Development Agency (*Razvojna Agencija Brčko Distrikta*). This initiative, established to assist businesses in the process of registration and so attract foreign direct investment, helped the NGOs compile the necessary documentation for registration. While this saved legal costs in drawing up a constitution, the court fees remained the same. In another example of organisations deploying social capital in lieu of economic capital, the St Sava's Youth Association and the Serbian Youth Association had their registration fees paid by the RS Ministry for Sport and Youth. This appears to be a case of nationalist social capital being converted into economic capital to ensure legal legitimacy for the two youth associations. For the RS Ministry the economic expense could be justified in terms of the accumulated cultural capital of being seen to work alongside and support youth NGOs in Brčko District. Other NGOs such as the Baza Association and the Grčica Youth Association, which did not hold these capital reserves, were struggling to register. These organisations pointed out that they could not afford the expense of registration and they did not have the contacts in the OHR, the District Government or political parties that could assist them. These examples would seem to suggest that the improvised state, in this case operating through OHR-designed laws and implemented by the ill-prepared District Government, have used legislation to legitimise certain organisations at the expense of others. The legitimised capital-rich organisations can thus be seen as 'gentrified', as they are rendered visible to processes of governance and deemed suitable representatives of civil society.

This explanation, however, underestimates NGO agency. By lending primacy to the policy environment in Brčko, such an account supports a 'supply-side' interpretation of gentrification, where the state is perceived to guide the process through targeted legislation. In practice, the NGOs themselves were active in shaping the policy to suit their own institutional survival. As competing organisations could not fulfil the criteria of registration, the policy became an instrument of gentrification for the NGOs. This dynamic was illustrated at a meeting called by the OHR on February 18th 2003. This event was organised as a response to the widespread criticism by the NGOs of the new Law of Associations and

Foundations. Despite being arranged by the OHR and hosted at the OSCE Political Resource Centre, the OHR Political Officer who chaired the meeting was keen to portray it as a “grassroots initiative”⁴⁰. It is ironic that the OHR could organise a “grassroots initiative” against a law that their legal department drew up, though it neatly illustrates the symbolic capital of OHR in its ability to monitor both the production and consumption of government legislation in Brčko. The meeting was well attended by the NGOs as they packed in to a small seminar room on a very cold winter evening. Based on my experience from the interviews I was expecting the organisations to be highly critical of the OHR and the District Government (who sent no representation) and to call for a lowering of the registration fee.

In practice, the course of the meeting did not follow these straightforward expectations. Following an introduction from the OHR Political Officer summarising the complaints she had heard concerning registration, each NGO representative stood up and described their experiences of attempting to register in Brčko. All the contributions followed a similar pattern: introduction; thanks to the OHR for calling the meeting; complaints about the injustices of the registration fees and bureaucracy. The OHR representative attempted to steer the meeting towards a measurable outcome asking the organisations “what are you able to undertake together?” “We should write a letter to the Mayor” suggested the representative from the Scouts’ Union, to much agreement. “We should ask for an annulment of the registration fees – why should we pay again?” enquired a Proni representative. Though the universal benefit of reducing registration fees would seem to be beyond question, the notion of a reduction sparked arguments. The Women’s Roundtable representative began to warn against lowering registration fees:

⁴⁰ Comment by OHR Political Officer in an NGO Registration Meeting, Brčko 18th February 2003.

If the cost of registration is dropped all sorts of associations would want to register. Then some organisations that were multiethnic would divide and register on their own...NGOs shouldn't have a political stance.

(Comment by a representative of Women's Roundtable, NGO Registration Meeting 18th February 2003)

These remarks were clearly targeted at the Women's Roundtable 'rivals' the Serb Sister's Association and the Bosniyak Women's Association, while containing a veiled threat to the OHR that the Women's Roundtable could split if registration were free. This sentiment highlights how the NGOs were attempting to use the registration fee to reproduce a series of cultural traits attached to being an NGO, one of which was multi-ethnicity. The representative from the Women's Roundtable was suggesting that to gentrify, that is to become recognised as an NGO, should involve surrendering the social capital of nationalist affiliation (which had been so lucrative in the case of St. Sava's Youth Association and the Serbian Youth Association). There seems to be an innate exclusivity behind this sentiment: either benefit from legal legitimacy or continue to benefit from nationalist political patronage. In a similar way, the representative of the Scouts' Union suggested that only 'local' organisations should benefit from a reduction in the registration fee, as international organisations "could afford it"⁴¹. Again, the registration fee was being utilised as a tactic by the NGOs to ensure that gentrified NGOs were a community of 'local' organisations, as opposed to including those that benefit already from international links. While these two examples suggest an underlying economic motivation for support of the registration fee, there were also comments concerning the cultural make-up of prospective NGOs. The Regional Coordinator of Proni related her experience of attending a follow-up meeting at the Political Resource Centre and being told by a series of organisations that when the registration fee had

⁴¹ Comment made by a representative of the Scouts' Union, NGO Registration Meeting 18th February 2003.

been reduced in Serbia “the next thing that happens is that you have people setting up gay and lesbian groups”⁴².

The example of the Law of Associations and Foundations demonstrates the bureaucratisation of the symbolic capital held by the agencies of the state. Brčko District’s improvised state, operating in this instance through the District Government and OHR, attempted to confer legitimacy only on those organisations with reserves of economic capital by setting high demands for NGO registration. This technique appears to render these civil society organisations distinct from the state, labelling them as ‘non-governmental organisations’ and granting them individual legal personality. However, the NGOs’ economic motivation to register (the desire to gain Government funding for specific projects) connected the NGOs to the state institutions in Brčko; while in symbolic terms, registration was producing visible and classifiable NGOs, leading to their enrolment into the governmental structures of Brčko District. This would suggest that rather than acting as a locus of dissent or civic participation, the NGOs were striving economically and symbolically to correspond with the demands of a blurred and nebulous state in Brčko District.

These processes also reinforce the gentrification of civil society. The demands for economic capital within the new legislation made donor funding a prerequisite to NGO registration. This reinforced the struggles for social and cultural capital discussed earlier in the chapter. In addition, the process of registration was reformulated by the NGOs themselves to suit their image of a gentrified civil society, purged of particular cultural traits. Rather than acting as a space of dissent or a check on state power, the gentrified NGOs were seemingly complicit with the agencies of the improvised state. The legislation was designed to render the NGOs visible, both to instruments of taxation and, potentially, to government funding. While this could be interpreted as demonstrating the rigid structure of state control over NGOs, in practice the situation seems more nuanced as the legislation was greeted by the NGOs with selective resistance and acceptance. The NGOs seemed disposed to act in certain ways as a consequence of their

⁴² Interview with the Regional Coordinator Proni, Brčko 7th May 2004

accumulated capital coupled as valued by the surrounding institutional context. This example of NGO registration highlights how the structure and agency of civil society gentrification can be better understood as a shared *habitus*, produced and reproduced by enmeshed state agencies and NGOs.

The metaphor of gentrification highlights the transformation of certain civil society actors, wealthy in capital terms, into NGOs. This process is structured by the survival instincts of these 'fictive individuals' as they strive to secure funding and legitimacy within the shifting discourses and practices of post-conflict Brčko. To identify certain organisations as gentrified involves the simultaneous recognition that certain organisations and individuals have either resisted this process or did not possess the requisite capital to gentrify. The final section of the chapter examines these 'ungentrified' spaces of civil society.

6.5 Organisational Absences

We waited by the verge of the road to Tuzla in Broduša in the bitter cold. Sanela seemed unsure of where we were to meet the representative from the Roma Association, a group I had previously been told "did not exist" and were "impossible to get hold of"⁴³. We had managed to call the President of the association on a mobile phone and he had told us to come at a specified time and wait in the centre of Broduša. After twenty minutes we called again and had no response. We were beginning to give up hope when a large battered blue lorry rumbled to a halt next to us and a man opened the door and said "Fahrudin sam, hajde"⁴⁴. He was a giant of a man with hands like satellite dishes covered with tattoos. We drove through Broduša, past many lorries dropping off supplies for the permanent reconstruction work that is taking place in this part of town that was once the frontline of the conflict. [See Figure 6.5 overleaf] After ten minutes the asphalt ended and the road tuned into a quagmire. It was very misty as the lorry stopped where the minefields stretched out marking the end of town. We headed for a house which, like many others, had only its ground floor rebuilt. Fahrudin beckoned us in, it was definitely a 'shoes off' situation. We were ushered through a bare front room (apart from a very colourful carpet) and, after going through a curtain, up some concrete steps. We were in a 'living room' upstairs, where

⁴³ These comments had been made in an interview with a representative from Firefly Youth Project, 15th September 2002.

⁴⁴ "I am Fahrudin, let's go".



Figure 6.5 Broduša, Brčko

(Source: Author's collection)

there were no windows and it was extremely cold. Sitting in the room already were two other men, as it turned out the vice-president and treasurer of the Roma Association. The meeting was really interesting, though the usual problems with Sanela's translating. But they certainly weren't that chatty. They seemed resigned to the lack of help from the government, as they weren't getting any money. It struck me that they didn't want to 'play the game' like other organisations. They didn't talk in discourses or buzzwords, they just wanted better sanitation and humanitarian conditions for the Roma. In their discussion of the conditions, and from what I had seen on the journey in the lorry, nothing had moved forward, it seems that Dayton has overlooked them and they haven't been able to go through the usual channels. Half way through the interview an old lady entered the room (I think she was Fahrudin's mother) and sat on a carpet-covered sofa next to the window. She kept looking across and smiling while gesturing as if to rub her arms saying "zima, zima"⁴⁵. She said she had twelve children and what they really needed was a disco, and then laughed doing a funny dance with her arms. It was a real contrast to the three men. They explained that they couldn't even gain support from the network of Bosnian Roma Associations in Tuzla and Sarajevo because they are perceived as rich because they come from Brčko District. But

⁴⁵ Translated as 'winter, winter', a common expression in Brčko indicating the cold.

Brčko District Government isn't helping them out. So it seems that both the 'informal' and the 'formal' networks are failing them. It struck me that they are trying to improve the conditions of their group, and not simply trying to advance the standing of their organisation. This is difficult ground in this 'ethnicised' post-conflict situation because the temptation is to start talking of Serb Groups trying to work for 'their' people and the same with Bosniaks and Croats [...]

(Extract from field journal 27th February 2003 original emphasis)

This account describes a trip to the Roma Association in Broduša on the outskirts of Brčko. As this narrative suggests, the Roma Association had been difficult to find, it did not send any representative to OHR coordination meetings and it took no part in the negotiations to reduce the registration fee, though it had registered in 1999 in Bijeljina. By not taking part in these activities it had been rendered 'invisible' within Brčko District, or as the representative from Firefly Youth Project had suggested it "did not exist"⁴⁶. The language of the meeting with the Roma Association differed markedly from other interviews, there was no mention of applying for donor funding, of speaking English, of printing business cards or establishing an office. The organisation did not appear to be in a struggle with other organisations over such objects of social or cultural capital, and as such it did not seem interested in displaying the traits that constituted 'being an NGO' in Brčko. This move to resist struggles over capital seemed to disconnect the Roma Association from other NGOs, from the organisations of the state and even, as they suggested in the meeting, from other Roma Associations. Rather than gentrifying and binding itself closer to organisations of authority and power, the Roma group appeared to be an autonomous and ungentrified organisation speaking from the margin.

In a corresponding way, there seemed to be no pressure from state organisations such as the OHR or District Government to gentrify the Roma Association. The Roma did not seem to fit the symbolic landscape of prescribed

⁴⁶ These comments had been made in an interview with a representative from Firefly Youth Project, 15th September 2002.

solutions within Brčko, constructed as they were from the notion of ethnic conflict between Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. While there was little room within such a response for plural or multiple identities, there was even less for minority groups which existed outside this construct of three-way ethnic enmity. There were tentative efforts by international donor organisations to assist the Roma people through the Roma Association, for example in 2002 the UNDP ran a project to encourage Roma education through the provision of school supplies and money for each child attending school. Unlike many such partnerships, these activities were not focussed on ‘capacity building’ the Roma Association, through training in how to apply for funding or dealing with agencies of authority. Such training was considered unnecessary as the Roma Association were not considered “like an NGO”⁴⁷, but rather an unclassifiable organisation outside the symbolic understanding of post-conflict Brčko. This is an example of a civil society actor that has not gentrified into an NGO under the gaze of international intervention.

The Roma Association was not the only example of such ungentrified civil society in Brčko District. Another group of organisations that were acting as focal point for community participation were the *Mjesne Zajednice* (MZs). As discussed in Chapter 4, these territorially constituted organisations emerged from the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution and were the lowest strata of local government and conceived as a form of direct popular association (Pusic, 1975:137). They were small-scale organizations, with eighty-two covering present-day Brčko District (Rosenbaum, 2001). Though the 1974 constitution did not grant MZs revenue-raising powers, in practice this became necessary as the Yugoslav Federation began to weaken. According to Allcock (2000) each Yugoslav municipality became a federal arrangement of MZs (Allcock, 2000: 92). Beyond these brief surveys of Yugoslav constitutional arrangements it is difficult to find details of how MZs operated on a day-to-day basis. Anecdotal evidence suggests that their membership was nearly exclusively male and beyond their governmental function they operated much like a social club. A friend from Mostar, who said that her friends jokingly use the term

⁴⁷ Interview with a UNDP Project Officer, Brčko 15th April 2003.

'*Mjesne Zajednice*' as a derogatory phrase for something pertaining to an old person, supported this impression.

Whatever the form of MZs over the 1980s and 1990s, their role changed after the conflict. Following the Final Award in Brčko District the MZs were formally disbanded as, according to an OHR Political Officer, "the authority of Brčko District Government cannot be sub-divided, and so the *Mjesne Zajednice* cannot have any governmental function"⁴⁸. This differs from the RS and Federation where the MZs have retained a government role, collecting taxes and indicating areas of community need. Since their formal dissolution their role in Brčko has been more difficult to define, as they have continued to informally function as loci of community organization, particularly in the field of returns. Though traditionally territorially defined, following the displacement of Brčko's population during the conflict whole MZs relocated to function as 'MZs in exile'. In an interview a Bosnijak displaced person (DP) explained the way in which the MZ from Klanac (see Map 5.1) relocated to the village of Rahić following the violent displacement of the urban population to rural areas of the District:

DP: These old MZs never stopped working, for example MZ Klanac leadership was the same but in Rahić. They had their office there, they had people who would come and join and have fun, well not fun, but have meetings or whatever. They organised events.

AJ: So people displaced from Klanac all over the district would go to the office in Rahic?

DP: Yes, and they organised reconstruction. The Serbs in Klanac in town formed their own MZ and have stayed.

(Excerpt from an interview with a Bosnijak DP, Brčko, 22nd April 2003)

As this exchange suggests, the MZs became conduits for information between state agencies (such as the OHR and the Brčko District Government) and returnee groups. While NGOs were apparently misunderstood and perceived as

⁴⁸ Discussion with the OHR Political officer, Brčko, 13th September 2004.

‘international’, MZs were reportedly “much easier to understand [...] because it was like that before the war and people can see MZs are fighting for them [...] there are people every day going to MZs with requests for something or another”⁴⁹. It seems that the continuity of MZs, from pre- to post-conflict granted them a variety of symbolic capital, manifest as legitimacy and trust, which the gentrified NGOs could not accumulate, regardless of funding, capacity building or institutional support. Often NGOs drew on this symbolic capital to advance their work; the Italian agricultural NGO *Cric*, which was based in a rural part of the District, described MZs as “vital partners”⁵⁰ when working with rural communities.

Despite these successes, there were many concerns amongst the international agencies about the political role played by MZs, as alluded to by a former OHR official:

The most important role of MZs since the war has been the dissemination of information. It is about dissemination of information both upwards and down. And the problem is that since the MZs themselves will end up themselves being politically aligned, the information that is being passed will always go through a filter at the MZ leadership stage.

(Interview with former OHR Official, Brčko 2nd June 2003)

While certain MZs in Brčko District were described as “too political” to be regarded as ‘civil society’ actors, others were embraced as partners within community development projects. The problem that was often communicated in the interviews was the difficulty knowing which of these kinds of MZ you could be dealing with, as explained by an OHR Political Officer:

⁴⁹ Interview with a Bosniak DP, Brčko, 22nd April 2003.

⁵⁰ Interview with Agricultural NGO *Cric*, Donja Skakava, 18th March 2003.

[...] they are a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde [...] They [MZs] really are the most committed form at present, taking care of the residents within that area. They have, in that sense, very legitimate concerns. But there are examples, such as Klanac, which are totally dominated by political parties, by party politics. I think the problem lies, in fact, when it comes to [pause] coming from a position where they had very strong links with the government when they had all these competences at the local level and they had an understanding with the government on how things are done and what to expect. The same kind of scenario has embedded itself, as it does in most relationships, that the politics take over and becomes an issue of you having the power and you putting your man into government. And this is something that we wanted to break.

(Interview with an OHR Political Officer, Brčko 24th May 2003)

These perceived dangers of MZs as potentially ‘Hyde’-like political organisations was also reflected in the language of the USAID funded District Management Team report on municipal assistance for Brčko District compiled in 2001:

By not fully appreciating the potential obstacle that the MZs could have been, and still may be, to the process of governance consolidation, a false sense of security regarding the stability of the institutions that have been established has perhaps been created. In this regard, efforts should be initiated to create ethnically integrated, community-based units of the District Government which can serve as a part of the Brčko governance structure. In all probability, at least some of the leadership of the MZs can and need to be integrated into such an effort. One alternative that might be initiated by the District Government is the establishment of 10 to 15 geographically based (if necessary, they could be gerrymandered in such a manner as to insure ethnic diversity) elected or appointed neighborhood councils. Such councils, while remaining subordinate to the District Government, could be delegated authority to allocate modest financial resources to facilitate community improvements and possibly given some degree of authority in the areas of planning and zoning.

(Rosenbaum, 2001)

These candid remarks point to the level of international engineering which was considered necessary to depoliticise and regulate the activities of MZs. This strategy was evident in the UNDP BLAP's attempt to create 'Community Development Groups' as rival non-political local community associations, in a similar vein to the 'neighbourhood councils' suggested by Rosenbaum (2001) above. The Programme Manager of UNDP BLAP explained enthusiastically "the MZs were not representative, so we approached the communities and told them about representation"⁵¹. According a UNDP Project Officer the process of 'improving representation' involved ensuring that the Community Development Groups included "representatives of youth, farming associations and women"⁵². There have, however, been doubts in certain quarters as to the viability of 'creating' new systems of communal organization, as articulated by a former OHR Official:

The MZs are much more experienced with dealing with the international community than the international community is with dealing with MZs. So, they will, I have been here a long time and they will quite openly, openly as far as I am concerned, they will recruit members of the other ethnicity in order to make them more attractive to donors and NGOs, they know that absolutely. One of the MZs I deal with is 100% Serb, but they did have one mixed marriage and I think there was a Muslim that lived on the border of the MZ. And the MZ leader was hilarious in including their name so that they got Muslim, a Croat and a Serb! The cynical manipulation of the International Community is quite amusing to watch.

(Interview with former OHR Official, Brčko 2nd June 2003)

This MZ-led representation was reflected in the formation the UNDP 'Community Development Groups' in eleven localities in Brčko District. The evaluation report of UNDP BLAP described the selection and setting up of these development groups as "particularly challenging for a number of reasons including local mistrust towards outsiders and a sense of dependency and entitlement due to previous humanitarian assistance for which nothing was asked in return" (UNDP, 2001: 23). In light of these potential difficulties I asked the UNDP Programme Manager how they had

⁵¹ Interview with UNDP BLAP Programme Manager, 18th February 2003.

approached the target communities and she laughed and exclaimed “oh, mainly through the MZs!”⁵² In supporting the sentiment of the former OHR Official, this comment reveals an ‘MZ pragmatism’ which permeated other areas of the UNDP Programme. In the glossy Community Development Strategies produced for each of the eleven localities the quantitative data is divided in terms of MZs and the groups define themselves as ‘Local Community Development Groups’, suggesting almost a sub-set ‘development group’ of the *Mjesne Zajednice*. It seems that that though lengths were taken by the UNDP to avoid the discourse of MZs, tainted as they were with uncertainty and political associations, they remained a key tool for organising community participation.

The process of rendering the MZs ‘representative’ and ‘readable’ as Community Development Groups appeared more for the benefit of agencies of authority than for local people. In a move related to the classification of MZs, the OHR was drawing up a Law of Local Communities over the course of the fieldwork period. Like the Law of Associations, the intended outcome of this legislation was the legal registration of all the MZs, coupled with a formal rejection of their governmental function. An OHR Political Officer described this process:

The Law on Local Communities establishes a reality that government competences have been taken away from local communities and so now in order to reassert their power they need to depend on something other than simply institutional cooperation with the government. They need to build up as grassroots pressure which is the only way of holding the government accountable.

(Interview with an OHR Political Officer, Brčko 24th May 2003)

This comment portrays how the new Law of Local Communities was being designed to place institutional distance between the government and the MZs. This rhetoric is reminiscent of the discourses of institutional autonomy, rendering civil society as distinct from the state. The familiarity between MZs and the District Government

⁵² Interview with UNDP Project Officer, Brčko 15th April 2003.

⁵³ Interview with UNDP BLAP Programme Manager, 18th February 2003.

was, according to the OHR, a barrier to the celebrated democratic attribute of “transparency”:

The way that authorities view MZs and include them is because the relationship is much more defined with the MZs than it is with the NGOs. Their patience with them is just a testimony that they are aware what is going on, who this MZ belongs to politically and their political infighting. And if these political bodies exercise influence on the government over the allocation of resources then we are in a very non-transparent system

(Comment made by OHR Political Officer, Brčko 24th April 2003)

This comment demonstrates the broad desire amongst the agencies of the state to convert MZs to NGOs so as to render the organisations ‘more transparent’, just as the District Supervisor had seen the role of NGOs as viewing the transparent democratic performance of the District Government (see Chapter 4). The UNDP Programme Manager explained that they would have a small fund that they could apply to for the funding of projects⁵⁴. The Proni Regional Coordinator described a programme they were organising to train MZ leaders in drawing up logical frameworks for funding proposals⁵⁵. Such strategies coalesce to represent a broad tactic of gentrifying the MZs into NGOs, to expose them to the same struggles for capital and attempt to render them ‘autonomous’ from government intervention. Such an objective operates with a narrow interpretation of governmental action, as the evidence from this chapter suggests that the gentrification of MZs into NGOs would not ‘autonomise’ the organisations but rather qualitatively alter their enrolment into the operation of state power. In contrast to the MZs as recognised governmental agents, the production of ‘NGOs’ allows the illusion of autonomy, to reproduce the notion of a separate state and civil society.

As in the case of the Roma Association, the MZs are not in the symbolic gaze of international intervention as it has been enacted in Brčko District. They are not classifiable, neither new nor old, neither ‘the state’ nor ‘civil society’ but hybrids

⁵⁴ Discussed in an interview with the UNDP BLAP Programme Manager, Brčko 18th February 2003.

⁵⁵ Discussed in an interview with the Proni Regional Coordinator, Brčko 7th May 2003.

of the two, and as such they have been rendered invisible within official accounts. While international discourses of 'localisation' have gained popularity, the MZs appear to represent organizations that are *too* local, as they do not possess the social or cultural capital to transform into NGOs. In contrast, gentrified NGOs can easily be classed as civil society, because they operate within an understood language and classificatory system contained within international discourses and practices of intervention. In cultural capital terms the past political connections of MZs in conjunction with their 'local' status trumps the meager value placed on acting as a locus of civic participation and organization.

6.6 Conclusion

The metaphor of gentrification has been used to describe the way in which social space has been transformed through the investment of social, cultural and economic capital. This metaphor helps explain the dual paradox of NGOs in Brčko. The first part of this paradox emerged in the previous chapter from the identification of NGOs by the agencies of the state (led by the OHR) as 'civil society', embodying locally embedded grassroots organisations providing a window on the performance of democracy in Brčko. Conversely, however, in the post-conflict period NGOs have come to be seen in Brčko as 'international' and 'wealthy'. The reproduction of this paradox can be explained in terms of the struggle by NGOs to accumulate social and cultural capital under the gaze of donor organisations and the state. By deploying the conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu, this struggle is seen as neither a product of rigid structures nor the individual agency of the organisations involved. Instead, there is a prevailing *habitus* of shared dispositions, shaped by the NGOs, donor organisations and the agencies of the state. The process of gentrification has drained the NGOs of a number of traits that are commonly held to define civil society. Gentrification has removed NGOs from local or grassroots structures as they are bound closer with donor and state agencies. Rather than encouraging collective undertakings, the process of gentrification leads to more competition and individualisation between the organisations. In addition, instead of acting as a locus

of dissent or a check on state power, the gentrified NGOs are enrolled as a symbolic resource granting legitimacy to state practices.

The second part of the dual paradox emerges from the ungentrified spaces of civil society. While organisations such as the Roma Association and the *Mjesne Zajednice* have become key sites of civic participation they have been marginalised in terms of donor funding and have been ignored in formal processes of NGO coordination. These organisations do not fit the symbolic landscape of international intervention, as they blur and problematise the sanitised discourses of ethnic conflict (in the case of the Roma Association) and understandings of state and non-state actors (in the case of the *Mjesne Zajednice*). The exclusion of such organisations from official discourses points to an underlying symbolic violence, as NGOs become ‘understood’ as the only official representatives of civil society.

Chapter 7

Conclusion:

Examining spaces of democracy

7.1 Introduction

The bridge was about two hundred and fifty paces long and about ten paces wide save the middle where it widened out into two completely equal terraces placed symmetrically on either side of the roadway and making it twice its normal width. This was the part of the bridge known as the *kapija*. [...] The *kapija* was the most important part of the bridge, even as the bridge was the most important part of the town, or as a Turkish traveller, to whom the people of Višegrad had been very hospitable, wrote in his account of his travels: 'their *kapija* is the heart of the bridge, which is the heart of the town which must remain in everyone's heart'. [...] At every time of year the *kapija* was a real boon for great and small. Then every citizen could, at any time go out to the *kapija* and sit on the *sofa*, or hang about it on business or in conversation. [...] Someone affirmed long ago (it is true that he was a foreigner and spoke in jest) that this *kapija* had an influence on the fate of the town and even on the character of its citizens.

(Andric, 2000: 14-20)

In *The Bridge on the Drina* (2000) Ivo Andrić uses the construction of a stone bridge in Višegrad, eastern Bosnia, as a central point in his vivid depiction of the ebbs and flows of regional history. As this extract describes, at the centre of the bridge is a *kapija*, a communal area where local townspeople would gather to deliberate on politics, religion and the affairs of the town. In Andrić's account, the *kapija* acts as a symbol of the possibilities for the negotiation of individual and collective interests and therefore recalls a particular ideal of civil society associated with classical literature (see Arato and Cohen, 1995: 7-8). The ephemeral moments of interaction and exchange on the *kapija* suggest informal associations organised around trust and tradition. It was these moments of civic association that this ethnographic research has attempted to capture, through an examination of the production of civil society in post-conflict Brčko District, Bosnia.

This final chapter presents the two key arguments of the thesis, followed by a discussion of the relevance of this ethnographic research to the theories and practices of political geography. The first argument centres upon the practices of democratization in Brčko District. Despite the rhetoric of Brčko District's unique status within Bosnia, the international interventions in the area have depended upon the same reductive conceptions of multi-ethnicity and democracy rehearsed in the Dayton Agreement. Rather than encouraging more fluid conceptions of territory and identity, the international intervention in Brčko has echoed discourses of 'neutrality' and democratic 'transparency'. The second argument concerns the production of civil society in Brčko District. The conflation of NGOs with civil society in Brčko has led to a process of 'social gentrification', where particular individuals and organisations strive to gain funding and legitimacy. This process, whereby international organisations recognise and reward local organisations capable of projecting a particular 'professional' image, marginalises institutions unwilling or unable to conform to bourgeois norms. This thesis draws attention to the *Mjesne Zajednice*, community associations which demonstrate the values of civil society but lack the social and cultural capital that would valorize them in the eyes of the

improvised state in Brčko District. The final section of the conclusion reflects on the importance of these findings to contemporary political geography.

7.2 The Democratization of Brčko District

The international response to the Bosnian conflict was characterised by two interlinked discourses: *Balkanism*, which presented the conflict as a consequence of ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’, and *ontopology*, where ethno-national identities were linked to specific territories (Todorova, 1997; Campbell, 1998a drawing on Derrida, 1994). The result was the Dayton Peace Agreement which divided Bosnia into two ‘entities’: the Muslim Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska. Many international observers were quick to point to the success of this strategy, claiming that it had ended the cycles of military violence, whilst also creating a “unified multi-ethnic Bosnian state” (Holbrooke, 1999). The experiences of post-conflict Bosnia have not reflected this celebratory rhetoric (Campbell, 1999; Hayden, 2002), as the existence of the two entities has prevented the functioning of state institutions, and allowed nationalist political leaders to continue to trade on fear of conquest by other ‘ethnic groups’ (Belloni, 2001). The continuing strength of nationalist political parties, coupled with high levels of international intervention years after the end of the conflict, would appear to cast doubt on the viability of ontopology as a peacemaking strategy.

Brčko offered an alternative to the idea that ethno-national identities should be reflected in the establishment of ethnically distinct territories. The absence of this territory from the Dayton Peace Agreement provided an opportunity to enact a multi-ethnic solution, in contrast to the polarisation of the two entities. In 1999, the ‘Final Award’ established the former Brčko Municipality as a ‘special district’ of Bosnia, separate from the two entities and committed to multi-ethnic government, schools, judiciary and police. This solution involved a dramatic increase in the scale of international intervention, as the Office of the High Representative assigned a

District Supervisor to administer the creation of the 'special district' and the establishment of 'multi-ethnic democracy'.

Though there have been successes in Brčko in relation to the return of refugees and economic performance, this has been matched by increased international supervision and intervention. My research suggests that the emphasis on 'multi-ethnicity' in the Final Award has not generated vocabularies of multi-ethnic identity within the organisations responsible for governing the District in the post-conflict period. In Chapter 4, I demonstrated that international organisations charged with the task of governing post-conflict Brčko have replaced notions of multi-ethnicity with policies of ethnic neutrality. Rather than promoting genuinely plural institutions and opportunities for increased interaction between ethnic groups, ethnic neutrality simply implies that Bosnijaks, Croats and Serbs should be treated the same. This technique echoes the moral equivalency of international responses during the conflict itself, where no side could be blamed for the "bewildering" conflict (Major, 1999). As a consequence of the creation of Brčko District, international agencies such as the OHR gained such comprehensive legislative and executive power that they can be best described as an 'improvised state', stepping in to perform state practices whenever they deem necessary. This improvised state has used such powers to confer democratic legitimacy, reducing the conception of multi-ethnic democracy to the use of ethnic quota systems to appoint government officials, to ensure that the Government and Assembly exhibit the 'correct' ethnic balance.

Drawing on innovative approaches within political geography and cultural studies (Cresswell 1996; Edkins, 2003; Butler, 2004), my thesis also examined the politics of the changing landscape of post-conflict Brčko. The reduction of multi-ethnicity to neutrality was reflected in the interventions of the improvised state into the symbolic environment of Brčko, through practices such as renaming the streets and issuing new house numbers. Rather than attempting to address issues of trauma and reconciliation, these interventions have encouraged the Brčko society to 'forget'. The only sanctioned commemoration is that of 'Brčko District Day', an occasion

which serves to revitalise the improvised state through the celebration of its founding moment.

Alongside reductive conceptions of multi-ethnicity, international intervention in Brčko has conceived democracy in narrow terms as ‘transparency’. The Supervisor cited the ability of citizens to monitor the performances of the OHR-appointed District Government as evidence of the ‘democratization’ of the District. This conception of democracy has a series of effects. In the attempt to confer legitimacy on the practices of the District Government and Assembly, this discursive strategy draws attention away from the decision-making power of the OHR. In addition, this conception of democracy, lacking any form of electoral competition, sets a requirement for individuals and organisations to monitor the activities of the government. In the discourses of the OSCE and OHR, this monitoring role should be played by the organisations of ‘civil society’.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this ethnographic examination of the democratization of Brčko District. First, intervention in Brčko has not involved a substantive rethinking of concepts of multi-ethnicity or democracy in Bosnia. Individuals in Brčko have been essentialised by international agencies, defined by their ‘ethnicity’. As Campbell (1998a) points out in relation to wider interventions in Bosnia, this practice serves to exclude or erase the possibility of multi-cultural or hybrid identities. In this optic, international intervention into the territory of Brčko was conceived in terms of competing ontological visions, rather than constructing more fluid or plural conceptions of territory.

Second, this ethnographic focus draws attention to the importance of examining the processes through which the state is performed, as opposed to more conventional material interpretations. Such a reconceptualisation serves to challenge claims that characterise the Bosnian state as ‘weak’ or ‘failed’. The central Bosnian government may be weak, but state *practices* in Brčko certainly appeared strong. This was an ‘improvised state’, where the responsibilities and competences were fulfilled by an ever-changing array of international and local agencies. The final act of legitimacy was performed by the OHR, as it held the symbolic capital necessary to

impose recognition on certain activities, while branding others as illegal or illegitimate (Bourdieu, 1989).

7.3 The Production of Civil Society

Since the early 1990s, scholars and practitioners have increasingly positioned ideas of 'civil society' at the centre of notions of successful development (Crook, 2001; Doornbos, 2001). In a European context, the role of dissident movements in challenging authoritarianism in Central and Eastern Europe lent particular credence to the notion that, by strengthening civil society, organisations could encourage liberal democratic change more broadly. Over the following years, the rise of civil society has become indelibly linked to the transition from authoritarian regimes to liberal democracy. The actions of the dissident groups saw civil society cast as a virtuous set of organisations, capable of holding the state to account and providing new spaces of civic engagement. These activities have led to a distinct democratic discourse of civil society which has embraced civil society as autonomous from the state (Lewis, 2001; Mandel, 2002).

The evidence from interviews and policy documents suggests that the international agencies operating in Brčko shared this normative view that civil society is necessarily distinct from the state. This definition has facilitated the branding of NGOs as examples of civil society organisations. However, this conflation of civil society and NGOs is a fraught representative strategy. The emergence of NGOs as agents of humanitarian relief during the Bosnian conflict influences their role in the post-conflict period. As a consequence of the abundant funding for aid and relief during the conflict large sections of the Brčko public link the term 'NGO' to organisations which are wealthy and international. This presented a paradox: while international agencies embraced NGOs as civil society organisations capable of stimulating civic participation, NGOs were viewed by the Brčko public (and often by the NGOs themselves) as disconnected from local struggles and linked to international networks of funding and regulation.

I have shown how these shifting perceptions of NGOs are linked to real changes in the role and function of local NGOs in Brčko District during the post-conflict period. In the quest for funding, local NGOs are increasingly seeking to acquire particular forms of social and cultural capital. The metaphor of gentrification points to the ways in which NGOs compete to deploy donor discourses and demonstrate their grasp of English, computing skills and staff management. I have also shown how the struggle among local NGOs to acquire these forms of capital has provoked competition, suspicion and secrecy. The production of a series of secretive organisations struggling to retain valuable information is contrary to the role prescribed for civil society by the OHR as monitors of the transparent processes of the Brčko Government. In addition, the struggles for social and cultural capital have reduced the radicalism of NGO projects, as they prioritise their quest for funding over developing emancipatory political projects. Rather than offering dissent, the NGOs sought to tailor their projects and aspirations to suit the priorities of donor organisations.

In chapter 6, I argued that these varied, and at times contradictory, processes of capital accumulation drew the NGOs into the gaze of the improvised state. This process of rendering NGOs visible to the state was most clearly illustrated through the introduction of the Law of Associations and Foundations in Brčko District. This strategy comprises one of the most explicit modalities of symbolic power: the use of legislation to legitimise certain activities and organisations. This law required all the NGOs to re-register in Brčko District, ensuring that they accorded with stringent financial and institutional requirements. Those organisations wealthy in terms of cultural and economic capital could register and label themselves an 'NGO', whilst those that could not register were excluded from funding opportunities and risked legal sanction. This process highlights the blurred and contested boundary between NGOs and the practices of the state in Brčko District. Moreover, these conclusions question the role of NGOs as autonomous centres of critique. Civil society organisations in Brčko were bound to the state through networks of regulation and funding and less visible processes of influence and legitimation.

This thesis has also identified limits to processes of gentrification. The *Mjesne Zajednice* (Local Communities or MZs) constitute an example of civil society that has remained ungentrified in post-conflict Brčko. Their connections to the state are explicit: prior to the conflict, they constituted the lowest strata of Yugoslav local government, with responsibilities for collecting taxation and communicating areas of social need to the central government. These official competences were removed in the post-conflict period, as the structures of the Dayton State failed to create a role for MZs. Unlike NGOs, MZs cannot be portrayed as distinct from the state. Indeed, the MZs are very difficult to define and categorise, and their association with Socialist Yugoslavia has seen them excluded from international funding or support.

The MZs have assumed a number of social and political roles in Brčko District. In particular, they have acted as key agencies in pushing for the return of refugees, advocating on behalf of displaced persons to local government bodies. This is not to romanticise these associations, for a proportion of MZs have been captured by nationalist politics and others have attempted to block the return of refugees. However, their connections with the government and their morally inconsistent behaviour should not, *a priori*, discount them as civil society organisations. The MZs have accumulated trust within their communities, their membership transcends lines of 'ethnicity' and they act as important sites of deliberation and exchange. Consequently, it seems that the MZs most closely approximate Andrić's vision of the *kapija* as a space of communication and exchange.

7.4 The Theory and Practice of Political Geography

It is not my purpose here to suggest definitive conclusions from this study: the discussion of research positionality in Chapter 2 described the necessarily partial and situated nature of all research findings. Rather than claiming some kind of synthesis, the issues discussed within the case study of Brčko's democratization

intervene in five current areas of geographical research: the politics of NGOs; recent ethnographies of the state; the application of the theories of Pierre Bourdieu; the use of ethnographic methodologies, and the practice of writing critical histories. Each of these themes will be addressed below.

As the methodology adopted in this thesis suggests, to understand the processes of democratization in Brčko, or their absence, it is necessary to examine ethnographically the three-fold relationship between international agencies, locally based NGOs and the Bosnian State, as well as the manner in which this relationship is performed in practice - and represented in space. Such an approach evokes questions of politics, power and agency. Challenging an historical focus on NGOs as unproblematically virtuous, recent research has explored the diverse effects of NGO interventions in areas of the world dependent to advanced capitalism (Murray Li, 1999; Miller and Martin, 2003). Associated work has eschewed an historical focus on the external reports and large-scale projects to focus instead on the inner workings of power within these organisations (Howell, 2000; Mawdsley *et al.*, 2002). My distinctive contribution to this literature has been to examine the everyday operation of NGOs in Bosnia, drawing on interviews with key officials, participant observation and other observational strategies. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, this examination has highlighted the patterns of dependence and legitimacy binding NGOs with broader international organisations which have come to substitute the state.

In exploring the aspirations and practices of the improvised state in Brčko, I have drawn on recent ethnographic work that re-theorises the state (see Trouillot, 2002; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Painter, 2003; Nordstrom, 2003). This literature looks beyond large-scale government structures and epochal events to explore the politics of everyday encounters between government and non-government officials. These practices were labelled the 'improvised state', a phrase which describes the *ad hoc* way in which state functions were carried out by a range of individuals and agencies. This argument contributes to debates concerning transnational governmentality by exposing the importance of new institutional forms distinct from government in

practices of contemporary governance (Gledhill, 1999; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Flint, 2003). The concept of an improvised state also questions 'failed state' rhetoric, dependent as it is on normative assumptions of statehood. Rather than dismissing sites of post-conflict international intervention as 'failed states', there is a need for political geographers to take seriously the banal practices and spaces which serve to revitalise the improvised state and reproduce its symbolic power.

The conflation of state power with the accumulation of symbolic capital was one way in which this thesis drew on the theorisations and methodologies of Pierre Bourdieu. There has been a limited use of Bourdieu's work within geographical literature, perhaps as a consequence of his sociological past and anthropological methodology (notable exceptions include Painter, 2000 and Cresswell, 2002). This thesis has demonstrated that Bourdieu's conceptual framework of *capital*, *field* and *habitus* provides a valuable toolkit for political geographers as it illuminates the politics and struggles inherent in social practices. Employing these terms to describe the effects of international intervention in Brčko avoids reproducing binaries such as structure and agency which are enshrined in language itself (The Friday Morning Group, 1990: 196). Rather, the metaphor of gentrification was drawn upon to demonstrate the political effects of the accumulation of social and cultural capital within a shared *habitus*.

In methodological terms, this thesis has employed an ethnographic mode of inquiry in order to take seriously Ó Tuathail's call for "grounded geographical knowledge over abstract geopolitical sloganizing" (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 655). Recent scholarship has revealed the value of analysing OHR documents and regional newspaper reports in exposing the political dominance of nationalist discourse in Bosnia. I have combined analysis of this material with interviews and observation designed to explore how people interpret and receive ideas. This methodology was time-consuming and restricted the scope of the research to a small geographical area. However, it provided rich detail of the practices and meanings behind political action in Brčko District. It has also allowed the thesis to demonstrate the 'multiple

Brčkos'¹, overlaid on the same geographical space and represented through the polarised symbolic landscapes of commemoration and graffiti.

These aspects of the landscape were also examined through a critical reconstruction of the history of post-conflict Bosnia. This approach points to the importance of situating present struggles for power and resources with reference to an historical understanding of regional politics. At the centre of this historical narrative is the importance of continuity. Academic narratives of Bosnia often select a single historical event through which to understand current regional politics, such as the violence of World War II, the death of Tito, or Milošević's speech in 1989 at the site of the Battle of Kosovo. The historical approach of this thesis has been to embrace historical continuity, as artefacts of previous political or social orders have been reconfigured in the present. The *Mjesne Zajednice*, established in the 1974 Yugoslav constitution, constitute examples of such artefacts. As discussed above, the *Mjesne Zajednice* have emerged in post-conflict Brčko marked by a different political role but a similar social meaning. The importance of such organisations is too often lost within academic analysis, suggesting an unquestioned adherence to the OHR notion that Bosnia 'began' at the Dayton Agreement.

This thesis has strived to evoke the complexity and contradictions inherent in contemporary Brčko District. Contrary to dominant narratives, Brčko is not a 'special' district, distant or distinct from the political struggles that shape everyday life. Neither is Brčko a 'problem' that requires a solution. In questioning such imaginaries, this research has exposed the reductive thinking underpinning the presentation of Brčko as a 'multi-ethnic democracy'. This concern marks a continuing task for political geographers: to problematise discourses which stabilise the past into unquestioned narratives, to challenge interventions which reduce identities to singular characteristics, and to question the conflation of civil society with the actions of NGOs.

¹ This concept echoes David Campbell's notion of 'MetaBosnia' or the multiple competing 'Bosnias' (See Campbell, 1998a: x; Campbell, 1998b).

Thesis

Appendix

NGO survey

**NGO Survey, Brčko District
September/October 2002
Alex Jeffrey University of Durham**

1. Name of Organisation:

2. Date and location of registration:

3. Address/phone/email in Brcko District:

4. Organisational aims/objectives?

5. What projects/activities/events does your organisation carry out or plan to carry out?

6. What local and international linkages do you have with other NGOs and associations?

7. What links do you have with governmental organisations?

8. Number of staff:

- a) paid
- b) voluntary

9. What are your methods of fundraising?

10. What are the long-term goals of the organisation?

11. What problems have you experienced working in Brcko District?

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